

Lord, What Should I Do?

By
Fred R. Coulter

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all true Christians who love God the Father and Jesus Christ with all the heart, all the mind, all the soul and all the strength; who are pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and meekness; and who are fighting the good fight of faith to lay hold on the hope of eternal life.

The apostle John was inspired to write of the ultimate love of God the Father and the hope He has given us through Jesus Christ: "Behold! What glorious love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God....Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we do know that when He shall be revealed, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is. And everyone who is having this hope in him is purifying himself, even as He is pure" (I John 3:1-3, AT).

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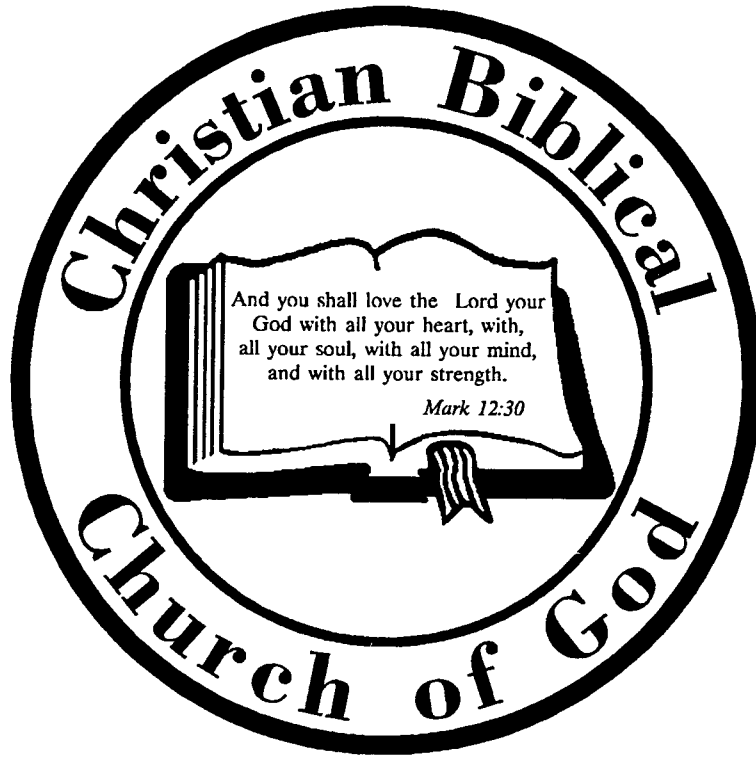
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The churches of God are being engulfed by a sweeping tide of doctrinal change. Doctrines that were formerly condemned by church authorities as pagan and unscriptural are now being sanctioned and upheld as "new understanding." Ministers and local church leaders are often the first to succumb to this subtle, persuasive and powerful subversion of the Truth of God. Many brethren in Jesus Christ are confused and bewildered by the major changes in church teachings, but they are afraid to question church authority. Those who object to these doctrinal changes are threatened with loss of salvation for resisting the "government of God"! But what should we do when we see the churches of God exchanging the eternal Truth of His Word for counterfeit doctrines of pagan origin? What should we do when we see God's churches crumbling from within? Should we keep quiet and continue to attend, trusting that God would never allow His churches to be overcome by false doctrines? Or should we make a stand for the Truth? If we speak out and we are forced to leave, will we lose salvation? What does the Word of God say? LORD, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Introduction

All true Christians are being targeted by Satan the devil in a subtle conspiracy to destroy their faith and belief in Jesus Christ. Satan is the Adversary! He is the Destroyer! He is the implacable enemy of God the Father and Jesus Christ and every begotten son of God!

In an August 1993 article I wrote, "Satan has launched a major spiritual battle for the hearts and minds of God's people. It is not limited to a single organization. It is a major spiritual attack to destroy the knowledge of God's plan! It is a major attack to ensnare the brethren of God with the deceit of persuasive religious words in an attempt to get them to accept doctrines which deny Jesus Christ and God the Father, thereby causing them to lose salvation.

True Christians are not the only ones who are under attack. Satan is out to attack everyone who names the name of Jesus Christ, regardless of whether he or she is truly converted. Satan desires to expunge every vestige of the name of Jesus Christ and any form of Christianity!

Satan's targets include every fundamental Protestant denomination. Here is a quote from a fundamentalist evangelical Protestant publication: "The Church in America [the Protestant churches] is under attack! The source of this attack is not primarily humanism, secularism, or agnosticism from without, but liberalism from within. **Liberalism within the Church is eating away at the core of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Christianity in America today is facing the same 'downgrade' that the Church in England faced 100 years ago in the days of Charles Spurgeon.**

"Spurgeon said: 'We live in perilous times: we are passing through a most eventful period; the Christian world is convulsed; there is a mighty upheaval of the old foundations of faith; a great overhauling of old teaching. The Bible is made to speak today in a language which to our fathers would be an unknown tongue. Gospel teachings, the proclamation of which made men fear to sin, and dread the thought of eternity, are being shelved. Calvary is being robbed of its glory, sin of its horror, and we are said to be evolving into a reign of vigorous and blessed sentimentality, in which heaven and earth, God and man are to become a heap of sensational emotions; but in the process of evolution is not the power of the gospel weakened? Are not our chapels emptying? Is there not growing up among men a greater indifference to the claims of Christ? Are not the theories of evolution retrogressive in their effect upon the age? Where is the fiery zeal for the salvation of men which marked the Nonconformity of the past? Where is the noble

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enthusiasm that made heroes and martyrs for the truth? Where is the force which carried Nonconformity forward like a mighty avalanche? Alas, where?

"If something is not done to stem the tide, the wave of liberalism will engulf our nation as it did England at the end of the last century. The evidence of the liberal landslide is rampant, but a few recent examples highlight its growing intensity. In *Newsweek* (8/9/93) an article entitled 'Dead End for the Mainline?' chronicled the demise of the mainline denominations in America" (*The Prophetic Observer*, November 1993, Southwest Radio Church, Oklahoma City).

The attack against all forms of Christianity has been well organized. Approximately one hundred years ago, the Synagogue of Satan finalized and implemented its master plan to destroy every vestige of Christianity and to conquer the world through its subversive tactics of monetary control of all governments. The ultimate goal is finally to rule the world and destroy all Christian religions. What has happened in England--in its government and its Protestant religion during the past 100 years--was deliberately planned and carried out by the agents of Satan. England has been reduced from the greatest empire in modern times to a minor nation dying of moral deprivation because God has been systematically eliminated from all public affairs and nearly every private life as well.

Moreover, the money exchangers have destroyed its wealth through wars, debt and the subversion of its government. Today, England is a mere vassal state controlled by the "unseen hand" of the Synagogue of Satan. At the present time, the United States is experiencing the greatest siege ever by the full forces of the Synagogue of Satan. Every type of Christian religion is under attack. Our government at all levels is dominated and controlled by the forces of the Synagogue of Satan. What has happened in England for the past 100 years is happening in America today. It will not take 100 years, however, to complete the enslavement of America. In only a few more years, the shackles of governmental and religious slavery will be locked in place.

In America today, Satan is attacking in full fury any religious organization that teaches any Truth from the Word of God. Now that he has nearly completed the subversion of Protestantism, he is focusing all his efforts on Sabbath-keeping Christians and their organizations. His ultimate goal is the annihilation of all Christians--all who are the begotten sons of God the Father and the true brethren of Jesus Christ.

True Christians need to be aware of Satan's devices. They need to wake up and perceive what is now taking place within the churches of God. Satan's subtle deception is being accomplished--not by a direct attack from without, but by a clever, insidious conspiracy at work within the churches' own headquarters. Satan is launching his attack with an avalanche of false doctrines through the top authorities and highest-ranking ministers within the churches of God. These ministers, who purport to speak the Truth of God, have in reality erred from the Truth and have been subverted by Satan into accepting false teachings. Wittingly

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or unwittingly, they have become Satan's agents by promulgating false doctrines from within.

This book reveals how pseudo-scholars and self-seeking ministers within the centrally organized churches of God are being used by Satan to undermine and destroy the faith of true Christians, ministers as well as members. The original apostles of Jesus Christ were confronted with the same subtle attack by false teachers and so-called apostles. The New Testament is filled with warnings against these "false apostles" and "deceitful workers."

You, your fellow brethren in Christ and the church you affiliate with may be experiencing such attacks. This book is designed to answer the question, "*Lord, what should I do?*"

Jesus Christ inspired and preserved in the New Testament what every true Christian needs to know in order to overcome the subtle, cunning deception being perpetrated by Satan. God has provided us with the knowledge of His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to repel all the fiery attacks of Satan the devil. The battle is for eternal life. Jesus Christ is on our side, and He has promised to be with us to the very end of this present age. We can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens us. We are to fight this fight of faith--even unto death.

"And I heard a great voice saying in heaven, 'Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.' And they overcame him [Satan the devil] through the blood of the Lamb, and through the word [their message] of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death. Because of this, rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to those who inhabit the earth and the sea, because the devil is come down to you, having great fury, knowing that he has a short time" (Rev. 12:10-12, *AT**).

In these trying times, our love and faith are being tested to see if we truly love God the Father and Jesus Christ with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our souls, and with all our strength. God the Father has proven His great love for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. May this book be a tool to help strengthen you in your love and faith toward God and in your resolve to be faithful to His Word.

* *AT* designates the author's translation. All other Scriptural references are from the KJV.

Chapter One

What Is Happening to the Churches of God?

Today, Satan is skillfully and subtly using one of his most powerful spiritual weapons against the churches of God, regardless of the size of the organization! It is one of Satan's most ancient and effective weapons, which he has so masterfully used time and time again with astounding success!

This weapon is the instigation and promulgation of false doctrines from within the churches of God! These ancient, recycled lies of Satan are always depicted as "new truth" or "new understanding." But the reality is that Satan's subtle lies consume and destroy spiritually. Like cancer, when they begin to take root, they are not even noticed! These malignant teachings encircle and slowly destroy the spiritual vitality of a church, just as cancer consumes the physical body. Their deadly tentacles reach into the vital spiritual organs of hope, faith and love, seeking to strangle, destroy and kill. Just as people have learned to live with cancer, many brethren are allowing themselves to be subjected to wave after wave of false doctrine, edging them closer and closer to spiritual death. While they may feel that "something is wrong," they are not aware that Satan is attacking them in an all-out assault against their faith and love of God. His diabolical aim is to destroy their understanding of God's Word and their gift of salvation through Jesus Christ!

In many local churches, ministers and members are accepting these "new teachings." Shocking though it may seem, many of these ministers and brethren have admitted that they know these teachings are false! Yet they are going along with these doctrinal changes. They are so spiritually lethargic that they are ignoring their personal spiritual responsibility to God the Father and Jesus Christ. How could so many of the brethren of Jesus Christ, the spiritually begotten children of God the Father, sink into such a dangerous state of spiritual blindness and slumber?

Two Fundamental Errors

The foundation for this degenerate spiritual condition was inevitably laid when the churches of God began to follow two fundamental teachings which appear to agree with Scripture but which in reality are gross misapplications of Scripture. The first erroneous teaching has misled many churches of God into accepting and practicing a form of church government which is actually contrary to the express words of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This false teaching is

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the assumption that God works through a hierarchical government, as we see in the nations and corporations of this world. Based on this belief, church leaders have patterned themselves after the governments of this world by organizing themselves in a hierarchy of ministers. Church members have accepted this ministerial hierarchy because they were told that this was God's form of government as taught in the Scriptures.

In accepting this form of church government, the brethren of Jesus Christ abandoned their God-given responsibility to guard the true teachings of the Word of God by "proving all things." Instead, they allowed a hierarchy of ministers to be superimposed over them. They looked to this "line of authority" to tell them what they should believe. The sad result is overwhelmingly evident in local congregations today. Church officials of various titles and ranks have exalted themselves above their brethren and are exercising complete authority not only in doctrinal matters but in all aspects of their brethren's lives.

Whole churches have been led to believe that this **hierarchical overlords**hip exercised by the ministry is "God's government." Based on this claim, everyone is expected to give unquestioning obedience to ordained ministers of any rank and especially to the "top leader." Everyone must obey their teachings and commands as the teachings and commands of God! The brethren, deacons and "lower rank" ministers are told that the men in charge have been chosen by God. God alone is personally guiding them in everything they do! Surely God won't allow them to make mistakes or to sin. However, if they do make mistakes or do sin, only God can correct them because the chosen leaders are "God's anointed." If anyone dares to question their authority and their teachings, or dares to expose their mistakes and their sins, that person is labeled as rebellious against "God's chosen authority."

This teaching is firmly entrenched in many churches of God. Ministers wield absolute authority over their brethren's lives. Any challenge to their authority is met with stern, arrogant threats of disfellowshipment and ultimate loss of salvation. Ministers have even been known to tell brethren, "Don't you know that I have the power and authority to command you to sin, and if you don't obey me, you are going against God!"

To perpetuate their authority, ministers repeatedly threaten and intimidate their brethren. When the gross sins of a "top leader" of a large church of God were on the verge of being exposed, he excoriated and browbeat an entire church by thundering, "Brethren, you are all a bunch of dumb sheep! None of you are going to make it into the Kingdom of God except me, and perhaps a few other ministers, and I even wonder about them!" This kind of ministerial abuse, in effect, denies that the churches of God are composed of the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, who are the children of God the Father. Instead of being nurtured and inspired to grow spiritually, the brethren of Jesus Christ are merchandised and arrogantly told that their "only duty is to pay and pray and support this work. That is the only reason God called you in the first place."

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Where this kind of "church government" is exercised, the men in charge have unlawfully usurped the absolute power and authority of God! God the Father and Jesus Christ have never relinquished their absolute power and authority to any man! When a church leader claims that all his words and actions carry the absolute authority of God, he has laid the foundation for the subversion of the church by Satan. This is the very claim that Satan used to raise up the Catholic Church, and by which he has maintained the absolute power and authority of the popes and priests for centuries. Yet the "top leader" of the largest denomination of a church of God praised the Catholics for their "church government from the top down." He repeatedly said, "If there is any one thing the Catholics have right, it is church government from the top down." No one thought to ask the question, "Why would God use Satan's hierarchical form of government in His Church?" The Truth of Scripture is that God never intended this form of government for His Church.

The assumption that God works through a hierarchical government has led to a second fundamental error in some churches of God. Their members have been taught that God works exclusively through *a single hierarchy* of ministers and therefore **a single church organization constitutes the ONLY TRUE CHURCH OF GOD ON EARTH**. This false claim is a clever device of Satan which church leaders willingly use to their own advantage! This teaching is falsely based on Scriptures which speak about **one "church of God,"** referring to the **body of spiritually begotten believers**, not to a corporate church organization. To claim that these Scriptures are describing a single corporate church organization is a deceitful misapplication of Scripture.

The True Church of God Is Spiritual

When the New Testament speaks about the "church of God," it is speaking about those who are spiritually begotten of God the Father. It is not designating any particular church organization as "the only true Church of God on earth."

How is the spiritual Church of God differentiated from a corporate church organization?

The spiritual Church of God is not limited by the laws of any state or country. It is governed by the laws and commandments of God as magnified by Jesus Christ. Moreover, the spiritual Church of God is not restricted to any corporate organization. It is the entire "Church of God" as God the Father in heaven has identified His people, the brethren of Jesus Christ! It is composed of every individual whom God the Father has personally called and selected and who has been baptized and has received the begetting of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it includes everyone who has the faith of Jesus Christ and who is keeping the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12). The spiritual Church of God consists of every individual who has the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in him or her and whose name has been personally written in the book of life by Jesus Christ Himself.

On the other hand, a corporate church organization, or association, consists of individuals who have decided to group themselves together under a corporate or

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associate name. In most cases, such church organizations are registered with the state(s) or country(ies) in which they conduct business. The state or country in which the "corporate church" conducts business may require such incorporation or registration.

In the world today, there are well over 400 Sabbath-keeping "churches of God" which are separate corporate organizations. Many of these Sabbath-keeping organizations also hold services on the annual holy days commanded by God in the Scriptures. Any Christian who has the Holy Spirit of God may choose to fellowship and affiliate with a particular corporate organization. The spiritual Church of God is composed of all those individuals who have the Holy Spirit of God, regardless of corporate affiliation.

God Did Not Appoint a Ministerial Hierarchy!

Nowhere does the Bible teach that God works through only one church organization or ministry. The New Testament clearly shows that there are differences of "ministrations" or "administrations." The different administrations are spiritual gifts which are given by Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the spiritual Church of God. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and diversities of administrations [works of service] and the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who is *doing* the inner workings in everyone in all things" (I Cor. 12:4-6, AT).

God does not limit Himself to work through one corporate church organization. God the Father Himself gives the begetting of His Holy Spirit to whomever He wills! He can never be restricted by the organizations of men. There is no truth in the claim that a particular church organization is "the only true Church of God on earth"! God does not give absolute authority to one "top leader" in any church organization. God never intended His people to be ruled by a hierarchical ministry with a line of "apostolic succession." This type of church government is contrary to the express commands of Jesus Christ!

"And there was a dispute among them, *namely* this one: which of them is thought to be the greater. And He said to them, 'The kings of the nations rule over them, and those who are exercising authority over them are called benefactors. But you *shall not be as they are*; rather the one who is greater among you, let him be as the younger, and the one who is leading, *let him be* as the one who is serving. For which is greater, the one who is reclining to eat, or the one who is serving? Is not the one who is reclining to eat? But I am in the midst of you as one who is serving' " (Luke 22:24-27, AT).

Contrary to this teaching of Jesus Christ, ministers in many churches of God have ruled the lives of their brethren with absolute authority "from the top down." Adding error to error, they have convinced the brethren that their salvation is assured as long as they submit to this form of authority. Those who have accepted and believed this false claim have been lulled into spiritual complacency. This spiritual lethargy makes it easy for Satan to introduce false doctrines which bring about spiritual blindness. In time, those who fail to awake from their

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spiritual slumber are overcome by total spiritual darkness! They have exchanged the "light" of Jesus Christ for the "darkness" of Satan the devil.

"And this is the judgment [and it is an ongoing judgment], that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; because their own works were evil. Because anyone who is practicing evil is hating the light, and is not coming to the light so that his own works may not be exposed *as evil*. But the one who is practicing the truth is coming towards the light, so that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God" (John 3:19-21, AT).

When a true Christian--whether minister or church member or not affiliated with any church organization--is continually loving God the Father and Jesus Christ, keeping the commandments of God and walking in the light of the Word through the power of God's Holy Spirit, he or she is walking in the light. When a true Christian turns from God and is not loving God, not walking in the light of the Word of Truth, and not keeping the commandments of God, he or she is walking back into the darkness.

One authoritarian pastor, who no longer wanted to be bothered when confronted with the truth, retorted, "I don't care what doctrinal changes are made! This [corporate church organization] is God's only Church. I'll stay put. Its leaders cannot be wrong! They are the experts; I will leave the doctrinal matters to them. Whatever I am told to preach, I will accept and preach, regardless." Satan can exploit this spiritual condition most successfully, and he will be able to lead such a person back into total darkness.

In another case a minister was asked, "How can you live with yourself before God, when you know all about the corruption, false doctrines and gross sins, and you continue to go along with it?" His answer was most revealing: "I just pull steel blinders down over my eyes, so I don't see anything." What a "steely" bit of self-justification to perpetuate his own position of power. He was more than willing to condone sin and corruption. He was more than willing to embrace false doctrines and satanic teachings. He was more than willing to continue to receive his paycheck. This kind of person has willfully blinded himself. This is the kind of attitude Satan desires to use. And true to Jesus' sayings, "If the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch."

How is your spiritual vision? Has the darkness partially blinded you? Can you see enough of the light of Truth to understand what is happening? Have you put on "spiritual blinders" so you won't have to face the light of God's Truth? Will you open your eyes to the Truth of God, or will you accept twisted interpretations being presented as "new understanding"? What will you choose to believe? Your eternal salvation is at stake!

Chapter Two

How False Prophets and False Teachers Work Within a Church

Most people today think of a false prophet as someone who brings a supposed revelation of future events when in reality God has not sent him. In modern usage, the word "prophet" generally refers to one who foretells the future. In Scriptural usage, however, the word "prophet" has a much broader meaning. Those who preach the Word of God as pastors, ministers or evangelists are all "prophets" according to New Testament usage of the term.

In the New Testament, the word "prophet" is translated from the Greek word *propheetes*. This Greek word is rarely used in the New Testament in reference to a person who foretells future events. It is often used to refer to those who preach the Word of God under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or "those who proclaim the divine message with special preparation and with a special mission" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

The Bible reveals that not all "prophets"--not all who claim to "preach the Word"--are true "prophets" of God. There are numerous references in both the Old Testament and the New Testament to false prophets. In Old Testament times, a false prophet was one who claimed divine inspiration but was not speaking the Truth of God (I Kings 22:10-14, 17). False prophets were sometimes directly inspired by Satan the devil or one of his demons (I Kings 22:20-22). The New Testament warns us that there will be false prophets working deceit and teaching lies until the close of this present age, when Jesus Christ Himself will return to end their evil deception.

The Personal Warnings of Jesus Christ

As Jesus Christ began His ministry, He warned His followers to beware of those who would claim to speak the Truth but who would bring false teachings. "But beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves! You shall know them by their fruits..." (Mat. 7:15-16).

True Christians must look to Jesus Christ and follow Him at all times. Jesus said of Himself, "I am the door. If anyone enters in by Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture. The thief [false prophet]

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comes not except that he may steal and may kill and may destroy. I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly" (John 10:9-10, AT).

In the last days before His crucifixion, Jesus again strongly warned against false prophets who would come, preaching their deceiving messages. "Take heed [be on guard] that **no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying I am the Christ** [that is, that Jesus was in fact the Christ], **and shall deceive many....**For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that **if it were possible, THEY SHALL DECEIVE THE VERY ELECT**" (Mat. 24:4-5).

Revelation 12:9 tells us that Satan is actively deceiving the whole world! "And the great dragon was cast down--the serpent, the ancient one, who is called **the devil and the Satan, who is deceiving the whole world**; he was cast into the earth, and his angels were cast down with him" (AT). The Greek text clearly shows that this deception is active and continuous; the Greek tense means "is deceiving."

Satan is deceiving the entire world---all nations, governments and religions. At the same time Satan is using false teachers and false prophets in an all-out attempt to destroy the faith of ministers and brethren within the churches of God! So powerful is Satan's deception that Jesus said, "**...If it were possible, THEY [SATAN'S FALSE PROPHETS] SHALL DECEIVE THE VERY ELECT!**"

How are Satan's false teachers able to do this? How will they nearly succeed in deceiving the very elect?

The answer is revealed in Jesus' words to His disciples. We have read Jesus' personal warnings against these false prophets in the above passages from the Gospels of Matthew and John. In these Scriptures, Jesus describes two types of "false prophets," or false teachers. The first type is the wolf in sheep's clothing. The second type is the thief who comes undisguised but unawares. Both kinds of false prophets seek to exploit, steal, kill and destroy the sheep of God. But there is a marked difference between these two types of false teachers. The thief can be easily identified, and his evil motives are obvious to all. On the contrary, the wolf manifests himself as one of the flock, and his motives are hidden. His evil purpose is not even recognized by the flock.

The Most Dangerous Type of False Prophet

The apostles of Jesus Christ were repeatedly opposed by false prophets who like the wolf, pretended to be part of the flock of God. False prophets of this kind are the most dangerous because they work from within a church organization. In most instances they are accepted and approved as ministers and teachers and are given official status. They do their work subtly and covertly.

In the first century, while most of the original apostles of Jesus Christ were still alive and ministering to the churches of God, these false teachers worked their

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way into the local congregations. They subtly took control, cast out the true ministers of God, and changed the Gospel of Jesus Christ into a different gospel.

Down through the centuries, false prophets have been used by Satan to subvert the churches of God. These false prophets, or false ministers, are not interested in serving God and obeying Him. They are motivated by their own covetousness and the human lust for positions of power and prestige. Because they are not led by the Spirit of God, but are guided by human lust, Satan is able to influence them and use them for his diabolical purposes.

The apostle Paul called Satan "the prince of the power of the air, that spirit which works within the children of disobedience" (Eph.2:2). Satan is able to effectively use his powerful fiery darts to inspire thoughts of vanity, lust, and deceit (Eph. 6:16). Satan has his own demonic spiritual powers and forces in high places to influence men in positions of power through their human lusts and vanity. Paul describes this evil influence: "Because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against authorities, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this world, **against the spiritual powers of the wickedness who are working in high places**" (Eph. 6:12, AT).

The work of these deceiving spirits is evident in churches everywhere today. Satan's own ministers, who appear as ministers of righteousness, are teaching his lies! They are not following Jesus Christ. They have even worked their way into the churches of God and have seated themselves on doctrinal boards and have assumed teaching positions in church colleges. They work from within as an official part of the church organization. Using subversive tactics, Satan's ministers have subtly and skillfully taken control. Under their control, the Truth of God is changed little by little into a lie. The doctrines are so cleverly worded and so skillfully presented that even staunch Christians are being subverted.

How False Teachers Use the Word of God

Satan's tactics are not new. He and his ministers have used the same methods time and time again through out history. The church in Corinth, which the apostle Paul raised up, was confronted with these same subversive influences. Paul warned the Corinthian Christians of the deceitful methods being used by these false teachers.

These wicked deceivers were using cunning tactics. The apostle Paul reveals that they were working their corruption within the churches of God even while he was still alive! In his second epistle to the Corinthians, he exposes exactly how these false teachers were accomplishing their deceitful work.

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry [the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ], exactly as we have received mercy, we faint not; **but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness** [subtle, diabolical tactics], **NOR HANDLING THE WORD OF GOD DECEITFULLY** [This is exactly what is happening today--the false teachers and false ministers are handling the Word of God deceitfully]. **BUT WE** [Paul and the true ministers of

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God] **BY MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH** [the correct use of the Scriptures by studying precept upon precept and comparing truth with Truth] *are* commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God [unlike Satan's ministers, who work their deception in secret].

"But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost; **in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them..." (II Cor. 4:1-4, AT).

Satan has succeeded in blinding the minds of nonbelievers, but he also aims to seduce and deceive all those who believe the Gospel. To accomplish his diabolical purpose, Satan stirs up false teachers and false ministers to blind the minds of true believers with false doctrines through skillful, deceitful handling of the Word of God.

Because Scriptures have been used, their false doctrines look and sound blessedly-true! What could be more cunning? Yes, the Word of God is the Truth. But handling it deceitfully produces error.

Their deceitful interpretations of God's Word are backed by the clever arguments of philosophy and theology with intellectual-sounding words. On the surface, their false doctrines appear to be words of wisdom and logic, but they are truly satanic and diabolical! These deceitful teachers are not "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Yes, they use Scripture, but they wrongly divide it. The end result of such teachings is that they are blinded to the Truth of God. They believe a form of doctrine that sounds Scriptural because Scriptures have been deceitfully used and interpreted. But they are actually believing and teaching lies. This is precisely what certain men are doing who have seated themselves on doctrinal boards and have assumed teaching positions within the churches of God. Using the same devious methods, Satan and his ministers long ago succeeded in apostatizing the Christian-professing churches of the world.

All Christians today need to be aware of the subtle methods that Satan uses to carry out his insidious deception. We need to be on guard against these crafty devices. As the apostle Paul warned, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor. 2:11).

When the Blind Lead the Blind

What happens when true believers willingly follow ministers and teachers who have blinded themselves to the Truth of God and are teaching the doctrines of men? Jesus gives us the answer in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus Christ warned His followers to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," meaning their doctrine, or teachings (Mat. 16:6-12). These Jewish leaders taught that their human traditions were greater than the commandments of God! Jesus denounced them, saying, "...You have made the commandment of God [the Truth of God] of none effect by your traditions!

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"You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men....' "

"Then His disciples came and told Jesus, 'Don't You know that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant, which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone. They are the blind leaders of the blind. AND IF THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND, BOTH SHALL FALL INTO THE DITCH' " (Mat. 15:6-9, 12-14, AT).

By handling the Word of God deceitfully, false teachers lure their followers into spiritual blindness. And because they are all walking in blinding darkness, they do not perceive that they are headed for a dangerous fall. The gigantic ditch of apostasy lies ahead, and the fall will be dreadful!

- Many believers in New Testament times foolishly followed blind leaders into spiritual darkness and apostasy. Paul warned the Corinthians that they were being drawn away from the true Gospel by these deceivers. At the same time that the Corinthians believers were accepting false teachings from false apostles, they were beginning to reject the apostle Paul and the true teachings of Jesus Christ. The true teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ were being cast aside in favor of "wonderful new teachings," which undoubtedly were touted as a vast improvement over Paul's teachings! But they were false teachings from false apostles, who were identified by Paul as the ministers of Satan!

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul warned that their spiritual folly was leading them into disaster. Paul even used sarcasm as he endeavored to shame them for their acceptance of false apostles with their false teachings and their corrupted gospel, which the Corinthians were blindly following! Paul wrote to the foolish Corinthians, "I desire that you would bear with me in a little folly, but indeed bear with me! For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one man, to present you as a chaste virgin to the Christ.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve in his craftiness [Satan's subtle, blessedly-true-sounding lies], lest that in exactly the same way, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. For if indeed, the one who comes to you proclaims another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if you receive a different spirit [from Satan the devil], which you did not [originally] receive, or a different gospel, which you did not [originally] accept, you are going along with it *as a beautiful thing [and wonderful improvement over what we originally taught you].*

"For I reckon that in nothing have I been behind those super high-degree apostles....For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, who are transforming themselves into *the* apostles of Christ. And that is no marvel! For Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is not any great thing if his

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ministers also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness..." (II Cor. 11:1-5, 13-15, AT).

What a dangerous spiritual state the Corinthians had reached! The church of God at Corinth was on the verge of losing the Truth of God by embracing false doctrines! They were beginning to reject the apostle Paul, a true servant of God who had brought them the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Instead, they were accepting false apostles with their deceptive teachings! What spiritual folly!

What is the spiritual condition of your church? What are the doctrinal teachings in your church? Are you being taught subtle false doctrines which sound blessedly true? Are you falling into Satan's trap? Could you be deceived into denying the Truth of God and lose your salvation?

Jude's Powerful Warning

Jude, the brother of Jesus Christ, wrote his urgent epistle to the churches of God because they were in great danger of being ensnared by Satan's powerful deceptions working insidiously within their midst! They were experiencing the perversion of the Truth of God by ungodly men who were in positions of authority *within the churches of God* and who were using the Scriptures deceitfully to promote their false doctrines!

To combat these false teachers, Jude was moved by the Spirit of God to write his urgent warning. He declared, "... **Certain men have stealthily crept in**, these are they who a long time ago have been written about, *condemning them* to this judgment. ***They are ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God into licentiousness, and are denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ***" (Jude 3-4, AT).

These false teachers and false apostles had succeeded in infiltrating the churches of God and were actively changing the *true* teachings of Jesus Christ into a *perverted* gospel. They were denying the Lord Jesus Christ by rejecting His teachings! They were robbing the Word of God of its power!

These Scriptures were not written only for the New Testament churches. The words of Paul and of Jude have been preserved as a prophecy and a warning for us today! The apostle Paul declared that in the **last days** there would be men who would *appear* to be godly but who would deny the true power of God (II Tim. 3:1, 5).

We in the churches of God today must heed the warning and take decisive action! We must reject all evil deceivers and their false doctrines! We must get back to the full truth of God as contained in the Scriptures. We must do it with all our hearts and all our minds, in full faith and in the love of God, before it is too late and we become helpless victims of Satan's deceptive teachings! Passively doing nothing will only lead to being fully blinded.

Chapter Three

Deception Will Lead to Apostasy!

The apostle Paul gives a powerful warning in his second epistle to the church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote this epistle in the first century, when Satan's deception was well under way, and the true churches of God were already being infiltrated by false teachers with seducing spirits. Paul earnestly admonished, "**Do not let anyone deceive you by any means...**" (II Thes. 2:3, AT).

What were the means that these false teachers were using to deceive the brethren? The answer is revealed in the first two verses of this same chapter. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him [he is beseeching for the sake of their calling and eternal salvation through God the Father and Jesus Christ], for you not to be quickly shaken in *your* minds, nor be troubled, neither **by spirit** [from Satan], nor **by word** [a message or teaching], nor **by epistle, as if by us** [letters falsely written in Paul's name, alleged to be the epistles of Paul or one of the other true apostles of Jesus Christ], that the day of the Christ is *now* present" (II Thes. 2:1-2, AT).

What presumptuous gall to use such tactics! Satan is bold! He means business! No wonder he is called the Adversary of God! His false ministers were actually using the apostle Paul's name to promote their false doctrines! They were craftily writing letters to mislead the brethren and were claiming that their false teachings were authorized by Paul and the other apostles of Jesus Christ. This is why Paul wrote so forcefully, urging the brethren not to let anyone deceive them by *any means*--by spirit, by word or by epistle!

Paul's warning was not only for the Thessalonians of the first century. It is a warning for true Christians of every generation! Paul revealed that Satan's deception would continue down through the centuries and would reach a climax in the last generation shortly before the return of Jesus Christ. Notice! The apostasy must come first, before the day of the Lord! "**Do not let anyone deceive you by any means, for that day [of the Lord] shall not come**, except there shall have come **the apostasy first**, and the man of sin, the son of perdition, shall have been revealed, the one who is opposing and exalting himself above every thing which is called God, or object of veneration; so that as God, he *goes* into the temple of God, to sit down, *while* proclaiming that he himself is God" (II Thes. 2:3-4, AT).

Paul warns that the end result of Satan's age-old deception will be a heinous **apostasy**. The Greek word literally means to stand aside from God, or push God aside. Apostasy is defined as "to abandon what one believes in, as a faith"

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(*Webster's New World Dictionary*). In order to abandon the faith, one must have first been a believer. A person cannot abandon something he or she does not have.

Being deceived is the first step toward apostasy. Apostasy is not the beginning of evil, it is the culmination of wave after wave of lying deceptions. This is why Paul emphatically warned, **"Do not let anyone deceive you by any means."**

Paul's words are a timely warning for true Christians in these end times. The prophesied apostasy is clearly happening in the world today. In its educational systems, in its religions, in its governments, the knowledge of God is being pushed aside and eliminated. Basic moral values founded in God's Word, which the world had formerly accepted, are being systematically expunged or nullified in every aspect of life. In their place stands Satan's godless "New Age" human philosophy.

To fully control this apostasy, Satan is bringing about the amalgamation of the world's religions into a united global church! It will become *the new one-world religion*. In a world long devoid of God's Truth, this new amalgamation of religions will be received as a wonderful "spiritual advancement." In reality, it will be a grand pantheon of Satan's religions and his gods. This "new" union of all religions will be the prophesied "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth" (Rev. 17:5). Just as Satan is inspiring an ecumenical movement among the religions of the world, he is also subverting all nations and governments into accepting a one-world government. This one-world government will be the beast which "Babylon the Great" will ride (Rev. 17:1-6).

At the same time that the prophesied apostasy is unfolding in the world, an apostasy is taking root within the churches of God. Satan is busy wherever possible within the churches of God! His goal is to destroy the Truth of God and the spiritual Church of God! He aims to deceive and destroy every begotten son of God by any means possible. Since he cannot kill every true Christian physically, he uses his seductive deceptions to subvert and destroy them spiritually. The most effective and least detectable method that Satan uses to deceive true believers is the promulgation of false doctrines from within their own church organization.

Satan is successfully using this insidious tactic in the churches of God today. True to the prophecy of Paul, those who once accepted and believed the Truth of God are abandoning the Truth for false doctrines! This departure from the Truth of God takes place gradually and subtly. One by one, false doctrines creep in and begin to replace the true teachings of God's Word. Little by little, the apostasy within the churches of God takes hold, and Truth and faith are abandoned. Just as "a little leaven leavens the whole lump," so the acceptance and belief of false doctrines act as spiritual leaven which leavens the whole congregation.

In baking, the leavening process begins slowly and imperceptibly as the tiny amount of leaven works its way throughout the large lump of dough. But once the leaven has permeated the entire lump, its pervasive effect is clearly

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visible, as it completely leavens the whole lump. The original lump of dough is completely changed into a wholly leavened loaf of bread.

Spiritual leaven works the same way. When a little leaven of false doctrine enters a church, it must immediately be rejected. If it is allowed to remain as a teaching of the church, it will only lead to the spread of error. Slowly and insidiously, more and more false doctrine will be introduced, until these deceptive teachings permeate the entire church. Then this spiritual leaven will explode into mammoth doctrinal changes, transforming a church of God into an entirely different church altogether--retaining none of the original teachings of Jesus Christ.

The spiritual danger from the leaven of false doctrines has existed since Jesus Christ began His true Church. Just as Jesus Christ warned His disciples to beware of the doctrinal leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the apostle Paul warned the early New Testament Christians to beware of false teachers bringing false doctrines to draw away believers from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have read Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians, urging them not to let anyone deceive them by spirit, by teachings, or by a letter. Paul also warned the Colossians, exhorting the brethren not to allow any man to deceive them with clever-sounding doctrines of philosophy.

"And this I am telling you, so that NO ONE MAY DECEIVE YOU by persuasive speech....Beware, lest there shall be anyone who is making a prey of you [as one stalks an animal to kill] through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:4, 8, AT).

An animal that becomes a prey is stalked unawares until the hunter is in a position to attack. When the prey has been killed, it is dragged off to be devoured as a meal. In the same way, Paul is warning us to beware of those who would destroy us spiritually by involving us in philosophy and the doctrines and commandments of men, and ultimately the worship of fallen angels, thereby dragging us off to spiritual death.

The apostle Peter admonished, "Be sober! Be vigilant! Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, is prowling about seeking anyone he may devour. Whom RESIST, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are being accomplished in your brethren which are in the world" (I Pet. 5:8-9, AT).

Those who desire to follow the true teachings of Jesus Christ must constantly be on guard against Satan and his seductive teachings through false prophets and false apostles. Every true believer must heed the urgent warnings of the true apostles of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament. These inspired words were written for *all true Christians*, "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11). As true Christians, each of us has a personal responsibility to God--WE ARE NOT TO ALLOW ANYONE TO DECEIVE US BY ANY MEANS!

False Doctrines Deny God the Father and Jesus Christ

Many in the New Testament churches of God failed to heed the warnings of Paul and the other apostles of Jesus Christ. Whole congregations gradually succumbed to the creeping leaven of false doctrines being spread by false ministers of Satan working within the churches themselves. The insidious apostasy gained momentum after the death of the apostles Paul and Peter. John, the last of the original twelve apostles, wrote his three epistles against the evils and subtleties of the developing apostasy, which was spearheaded by false teachers and false apostles. After his death, the churches of God were swept up in a sea of false doctrines. The end result was the Catholic Church!

What were these deceptive doctrines that so effectively lured the first-century churches of God away from the true teachings of Jesus Christ? Two of the false doctrines which were foremost in the first-century apostasy are the same false teachings that Satan is promoting today.

One of these false teachings is the denial that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was the Lord God of the Old Testament, emptied Himself of His divine power and glory and became a human being. This false doctrine denies that Jesus Christ took upon Himself the same sinful human flesh that we have (Rom. 8:3, Heb. 4:14-15).

The apostle John gave this warning: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **be testing the spirits, if they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** By this *test* you are knowing the Spirit of God: every spirit which is confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. **And every spirit which is not confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. And this is the *spirit* of antichrist,** which you heard that it is coming, even now it is already in the world" (I John 4:1-3, AT).

We need to understand that demon spirits influence and inspire false prophets and false teachers. In reality, when we test the message of a preacher, we are testing whether that preacher is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God or by the satanic spirit of demons--the spirit of antichrist.

The apostle John clearly labels anyone who denies that Jesus Christ came in the flesh as being of the spirit of antichrist. The end result of denying that Jesus truly came in human flesh is the false belief that He never truly died! It is claimed that because He was God, he could never actually die. Therefore, it is reasoned, His death was only symbolic! But the Bible clearly teaches that *Yahweh*, the God of the Old Testament, divested Himself of His divine power and glory to become a human being for the express purpose of dying! To deny the human nature of Jesus Christ is to deny the reality of His sacrifice for sin! It is a denial of God's love and grace!

The second false teaching, the doctrine of the Trinity, comes in many variations. Few people realize that nearly every "Christian" religion in the world

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has some form of a triune godhead as a fundamental doctrinal belief. Fewer still have any idea that the esoteric Jewish kabbalist doctrine teaches a triune godhead within the so-called monotheistic belief of Judaism. Without doubt, belief in a Trinitarian doctrine is a characteristic of nearly every religion in the world! This major doctrine was passed down directly to the peoples in the Eastern hemisphere from the ancient Babylonian mystics, called Magi. (Read *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop.) Our Western nations inherited it indirectly through the philosophers of Greece and the influence of pagan Rome.

Belief in a Trinitarian godhead has blinded the nations of this world to the plan of God! The Trinitarian doctrine of the godhead restricts God to only three persons or to three manifestations of one person. With a triune godhead, there can be no Family of God. This false doctrine completely denies the truth of the Gospel that all who are spiritually begotten by God the Father are to become the spirit-born children of God.

The apostle John boldly declared, "Behold! What glorious love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! On account of this very thing, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. **Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we do know that when He shall be revealed, we shall be like Him,** because we shall see Him exactly as He is. And every one who is having this hope in him is purifying himself, even as He is pure" (I John 3:1-3, AT).

True Christians who are spiritually begotten by God the Father and who grow and mature in the mind and character of Jesus Christ will be born into the Family of God, sharing His power and glory as His children forever. This is the glorious, fantastic plan of God the Father and Jesus Christ. What an awesome destiny God the Father has planned for each one He calls through Jesus Christ!

God has given and preserved His Word, the Holy Scriptures, to reveal to us His wonderful plan and purpose. God the Father has given His Holy Spirit to us so that we can know and understand. God *wants* us to know and understand His love and His salvation through Jesus Christ. We can know His purpose for us! We are to be His own children--the spirit-born sons of God!

But the doctrine of the Trinity denies the true plan and purpose of God. Those who promote this false doctrine would have us believe that it is impossible to understand the nature of God, or the true purpose of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Satan is the spirit behind this subversion! He is the one who wants to keep the true knowledge of God and His purpose a mystery through the false doctrine of the Trinity. Any religious organization which holds the doctrine of the Trinity among its beliefs is clearly marked as having been subverted by Satan through his false teachers.

The Trinity must always remain "an unknown mystery" to those who accept and believe it. Satan does not want people to know that he has blasphemously exalted himself as a third "God" in a false triune godhead concocted in his own

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evil, rebellious mind. He is the god of this world! That is the diabolical secret of the third member of the mysterious Trinity!

Today, Satan is using the same deceitful, lying doctrines of demons that he used to subvert the churches of God in the first-century apostasy. Are these seductive doctrines now being promulgated in *your* church? If they are, **watch out! The deep ditch of apostasy lies ahead!** If you accept and believe the satanic doctrine of a triune godhead, you are *denying* God the Father and Jesus Christ, and you will end up in total spiritual darkness.

Warnings Against False Teachers That Deny Jesus Christ

When false teachers have exalted themselves to positions of power and authority within a church, they begin to introduce their seductive doctrines. At the same time, they begin to speak evil of the true doctrines of the Word of God. As soon as the minds of believers have been subverted and the initial false doctrines have been accepted, then more and more damnable heresies are brought in.

The apostle Peter strongly condemned false teachers who stealthily do their evil work within the churches of God. He warned, "But there were false prophets also among the people, as indeed **there shall be false teachers among you** [from within your congregations], **who shall stealthily introduce damnable heresies** [denial of the human nature of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Cross, the veneration of idols, that the church is the Kingdom of God, that one is born again now, Christmas and Easter], **and who are themselves even denying the Lord who bought them**, and are bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

"**And many people shall follow as authoritative their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of** [the Greek means "blasphemed"]. Also, through insatiable greed they will exploit you for gain, *with* enticing messages..." (II Pet. 2:1-3, AT).

These very words are being fulfilled today! We are seeing with our own eyes and hearing with our own ears the exact fulfillment of these prophetic warnings. **FALSE TEACHERS ARE SPEAKING EVIL OF THE TRUTH! THEY ARE DENYING JESUS CHRIST! THEY ARE EXPLOITING THE BRETHREN THROUGH INSATIABLE GREED!**

When a person speaks evil of the Truth, and the way of Truth, he is speaking evil of the Truth-bringer, Jesus Christ! Jesus said, "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE" (John 14:6).

When anyone speaks evil of the Truth, he is judging the Word of God! He is judging God's laws and commandments, which are truth, as unreliable. He is judging God's salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as unworthy. He is exalting himself and his opinions above the Lawgiver and Life-giver. In effect, he is denying God the Father and Jesus Christ.

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James, the brother of Jesus Christ, sternly condemned those who are judging God and His laws! "But if you are judging the law [and the Lawgiver and all that He stands for], you are not a doer of the law; rather, *you are* a judge. *But* there is *only* one Lawgiver who has *the* power to save and to destroy. Who are you, whoever is judging another?" (James 4:11-12, AT.)

God is judged by no man! But when men speak evil of the Truth, they are judging God. They are blaspheming the Word of God and God Himself as the Lawgiver. By judging the law, they are presuming to sit in the seat of God! That is what Satan has always attempted to do! There is nothing more arrogant and vain than to judge God!

Those Who Do Not Love the Truth Will Be Judged

When people do not love the Truth of God, God gives them over to believing lies! People who turn to lies believe them with the same conviction and intensity with which they formerly believed the Truth. When that happens, they have surrendered themselves to Satan's deception! They are his captives! That is exactly what Satan wants--to delude them into accepting false doctrines so that he can ensnare them in his ultimate deception.

Those who turn away from the true teachings of God's Word and blindly follow false teachers will ultimately fall prey to Satan's most masterful deception when Satan comes with all his powerful, lying wonders! When that time comes, they will be so deluded that they will join the deceived masses of the world in their worship of Satan! Satan, who has deceived the whole world with his lies, will be welcomed with open arms and worshipped as God in the final delusion of the Great Apostasy (Rev. 13:4).

Only by **loving the Truth** and **holding fast to the true teachings of God's Word** can we hope to escape this diabolical apostasy. Paul declared, "For the mystery [the secret of Satanism] of iniquity [lawlessness] is already working....And then will the lawless one be revealed [the world ruler possessed by Satan himself], whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy by the brightness of His coming.

"Whose coming [the coming of the Satan-possessed dictator] is according to the workings of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and **in all the deceivableness of the unrighteousness in those who are perishing, BECAUSE THEY DID NOT RECEIVE THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH**, so that they might be saved.

"On account of this, God will send into them the inner workings of delusion for them to believe a lie, so that **ALL MAY BE JUDGED** who are not believing the Truth, but are delighting in unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2:7-12, AT).

Paul clearly states that those who do not love the Truth will be judged because they **delight in unrighteousness**. They do **not** delight in **keeping the**

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commandments of God, which are **righteousness** (Ps. 119:172). That is why they turn to false doctrines. They want to be free to practice their moral corruption and then cover up their unrighteousness with doctrines that give an appearance of godliness (II Tim. 3:5).

Paul foresaw a time when many in the churches of God would slip into moral decadence. They would begin to delight in unrighteousness and would turn from the Truth, rejecting sound doctrine. Paul warned, "Because the time will come when they will no longer endure sound doctrine. But **according to their own lusts** they will accumulate many teachers, having itching ears *to hear new things* ["new understanding" that in reality is of ancient Babylonian origin]; they will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to fables [religious myths]" (II Tim. 4:3-4, AT).

Have you turned away your ears from hearing the Truth? Are you rejecting sound doctrine? Have you accepted false doctrines of religious mythology as truth? What about the doctrine of the Trinity and the denial of the human nature of Jesus? Are these false doctrines being preached by ministers and teachers in *your* church? All those who turn away from the Truth and embrace the myth of the Trinity and other religious myths will end up in spiritual blindness and will not even realize that they are worshipping Satan!

Whole churches of God are being bombarded by fables and religious myths

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"Do not be deceived! God is not mocked! For whatever a man may sow, that also shall he reap. For the one who is sowing to his own flesh, from the flesh he shall reap corruption; but the one who is sowing to the Spirit shall reap from the Spirit eternal life" (Gal. 6:7-8, *AT*).

It is God's desire that all true Christians sow of the Spirit to eternal life. We are to sow the seeds of the character and love of God in our lives so that we may bear the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Only then can we reap the reward of eternal life.

Chapter Four

No One Can Serve Two Masters

When the churches of God turn to the religious myths of this world and embrace them as doctrines, it is time for those who love the Truth to **choose** whom they will serve. Jesus Christ Himself gave us this profound truth: "**No one can serve two masters**: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will hold to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon**" (Mat. 6:24).

Are you serving two masters? You are attempting to serve two masters if you continue to listen to ministers and church leaders who have departed from the Truth of God. You cannot serve God in Spirit and in Truth if you are following those who are teaching as doctrines the religious myths of this world. God has called us out of the darkness of this world into the glorious light of His Truth. We are not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2).

**YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND CONFORM TO THIS WORLD!
YOU CANNOT HOLD TO THE TRUTH OF GOD WHILE EMBRACING
SATANIC ERROR! YOU CANNOT LOVE GOD IF YOU LOVE THE
WORLD!**

Those who love the world and conform to its practices **cannot** love God and do His will. The ways of this world are **hostile** to God (Rom. 8:7). God's Word commands, "Do not love the world, nor the things which are in the world. **If anyone is loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** Because everything which is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pretentious arrogance of physical life [the pride of life], is not from the Father but is from the world; and the world and its lust is passing away, but the one who is doing the will of God abides forever" (I John 2:15-17, AT).

Friendship With the World Makes One the Enemy of God

If we love God and His Truth, we will not listen to false teachers who love the world and its ways. The apostle John was inspired to write, "They are **of the world**; therefore they **speak of the world**, and **the world hears them**" (I John 4:5). Jesus Christ declared that His followers are **not** of this world! He said in His prayer to the Father, "I have given them Your Word, and the world hated

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them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14, AT).

Yet wholesale doctrinal changes are being made by the headquarters of one of the largest churches of God in an all-out effort to shake a "cult image" and to become more acceptable to the world. Think about this! If you conform to the world's standards to be accepted by this society, you are conforming to the ways of the "god of this world."

The apostle James wrote most dogmatically that true believers can not be friends with the world. He strongly condemned those who compromised with the Truth in order to conform to this world, saying, "You adulterers and adulteresses [in a spiritual sense, referring to their accepting and teaching the doctrines of demons], don't you know that the friendship [Greek *philoo*, a loving affinity as a brother] of the world is enmity with God? **Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God**" (James 4:4).

When the churches of God begin to adopt and practice the doctrines of Satan and his demons, then Jesus Christ, the Head of the spiritual Church, will be forced to fight against them! All who adopt Satan's doctrines are making themselves His enemies. Jesus Christ commands them to repent! He personally rebuked the church at Pergamos for this very error, and He commanded the apostle John to write His words as a warning to His churches in all ages. Here is His ultimatum to the church at Pergamos: "But I have a few things against you, because you have them that hold [to observe and practice] the doctrine of Baalam, who taught...the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication [spiritual fornication with the religious systems of this world--Babylon the Great (Rev. 17:1-7)].

"Also, you have them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes [imposing a hierarchical, dictatorial ministry over the brethren], **which thing I hate! Repent, or else [an ultimatum] I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. The one who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to [all] the churches**" (Rev. 2:14-17).

Many in the church of God at Pergamos were in a degenerate state! They had gone so far back into the world and its satanic system of religion that Jesus Christ warned that He would fight against them. Think about it! Unless they repented, their Savior would be quick to fight against them! They had made themselves the enemies of God by embracing false doctrines and committing spiritual fornication.

Today, many churches of God are falling into the same sinful errors as Pergamos and will receive the same stern rebuke from Jesus Christ. All who accept the religious myths of Satan's world are rejecting and denying the lordship of Jesus Christ and are making themselves His enemies. Jesus Christ will fight against them with the sword of His mouth--the awesome judgments of God's Word!

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Will you be intimidated and coerced into accepting these ungodly doctrines and make yourself an enemy of God? Will you force Christ to fight against you for your unfaithfulness to Him? He has given His ultimatum--He will fight against all those who refuse to repent of their spiritual fornication with this world! He will fight against them with the sword of His mouth, which is the powerful Truth of the Word of God!

"For the Word of God is **living** and **powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts** and the intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but **all things** are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:12-13, AT).

Let the pure Truth of God's Word penetrate deep into your mind and heart, so that you may truly repent as it cuts out the cancer of false doctrine. That is far better than having Jesus Christ use the sword of His Word to fight against you!

True Christians need to arm themselves with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17). They need to **use** this powerful spiritual weapon to defend themselves from every assault by Satan with his array of seductive false doctrines. Only by actively wielding the powerful sword of God's Word can Satan's delusive doctrines be overcome.

The apostle Paul knew how to combat Satan with the sword of the Word. Paul often quoted the Old Testament Scriptures in his battle against the false teachers who were subverting the brethren with their seductive doctrines. In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul pleaded with Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were succumbing to the influence of false teachers and were being led astray by the Judaizers. They were returning to the temple rituals and animal sacrifices and were, in effect, rejecting true justification through the blood of Jesus Christ. This practice amounted to absolute repudiation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Paul warned these early Christians that they were denying Jesus Christ and were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin!

To Knowingly Accept False Doctrine Is Willful Sin

Paul's inspired message to the Hebrew Christians is a timeless warning to all who turn away from the Truth and begin to believe and practice false doctrines. Paul pointed out to these early Christians that to **knowingly** turn away from the Truth and **accept false doctrines** that deny Jesus Christ is **willful sin** and will bring God's just retribution. He declared, "For if we **willfully sin, after having received the knowledge of the Truth**, there no longer remains any sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and the *white* hot fire ready to devour the adversaries. *Knowing that* anyone, after having cast aside the law of Moses, died without compassion upon *the testimony of two or three witnesses*:

"How much worse do you think the punishment shall be for the one who has **trampled underfoot the Son of God** and has counted the blood of the

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covenant, in which he was sanctified, as an unholy *thing*, and has **despised the Spirit of grace?**

"For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance belongs to Me, I will recompense,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord shall judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. 10:26-31, AT).

No Christian can afford to ignore this solemn warning! If we deny Jesus Christ and His teachings by turning to false doctrines, and **knowingly continue** in our unfaithfulness, we are removing ourselves from God's grace and are placing ourselves under His judgment! It is an awesome, fearful thing to face the judgment of the Living God and the prospect of the lake of fire! Far better to humbly repent and seek God's mercy and grace before it is too late.

Those who do not speedily repent of their unfaithfulness are in danger of being hardened in their own deception. Paul warned, "Take heed, brethren, lest perhaps there shall be in any one of you a evil heart of unbelief in **apostatizing from *the* Living God**. But encourage yourselves with each *passing* day, as long as it is called today, so that not anyone of you may be **hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**. For we have become partakers of the Christ, if indeed we hold firm the beginning of the substance of *our faith* unto the end. In that *it is again* being said, 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation' " (Heb. 3:12-15, AT).

When those who once believed the Truth become fully hardened in their hearts, they are no longer convicted by the Spirit to seek repentance. There remains no more grace for them, but only the judgment of God. Just as God destroyed those who sinned in the provocation in the wilderness, God will destroy all sinners who will not hear His Word and who despise the Spirit of grace.

God Will Destroy Those Who Do Not Repent

God, in His abundant mercy, does not immediately execute His judgment upon sinners, but always forewarns them of the coming punishment and allows them time to repent. He mercifully withholds His judgment when He sees fruits of repentance, but His wrath falls upon those who refuse to repent!

In His messages to the seven churches, recorded in the book of Revelation, Jesus rebuked those who had sinned by committing spiritual fornication. He warned them that He would punish them severely for their unfaithfulness unless they repented and put away their false doctrines. In His warning to the church at Thyatira, He reveals the terrible judgment that awaits those who fail to repent. Here is His sharp rebuke: "But I have a few things against you, *because* you have allowed the woman Jezebel [high priestess of Baal worship, a symbol of the harlot Babylon the Great with all her seductive doctrines], who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit fornication [spiritually] and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she might repent of her fornication, and she repented not.

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"Behold, I am casting her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her [the bedfellows who are drinking of the wine of spiritual fornication from the golden cup of Babylon the Great] into great tribulation, except they repent of their works. **And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He who is searching the reins and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works**" (Rev. 2:20-23, AT).

These words of Jesus Christ emphatically show that every Christian will be judged **personally** and **individually** according to his or her faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the true teachings of God's Word. Knowing that we will individually face the judgment of Jesus Christ, each of us needs to ask, "What are my works? Is my life founded in the love and faith of God? Am I holding fast the true teachings of Jesus Christ and God the Father? Or am I committing spiritual fornication by turning to false doctrines? Am I yielding to the influence of false teachings in the church with which I am affiliated?"

The New Testament plainly teaches that succumbing to the deception of false doctrines and false teachings will surely end in apostasy. The final step in the process of deception is the denial of Jesus Christ. **No one can serve two masters.** No one can love the Truth of God and embrace the doctrines of Satan. Every true Christian must be faithful to the Truth of God's Word. Those who love God the Father and Jesus Christ with all their heart and with all their mind will reject the deceptive false doctrines and false teachings of the ministers of Satan.

Chapter Five

How to Know That You Are in the Truth and in God

What is the identifying sign and Scriptural test of a true Christian?

We find the answer in Jesus' own words in the Gospel of John. Jesus declared that His true disciples are those who **continue** in His teachings. When speaking to the Jews at the temple, Jesus made it absolutely clear that His followers must remain faithful to His teachings. He said, "If you **abide** [remain and live] **in the Word, namely Mine, you are truly My disciples**. And you shall know the Truth, and **the Truth shall set you free**" (John 8:31-32, AT).

Jesus explained to the Jews that knowing the Truth and living by it would set them free from the bondage of their sins. Because some did not believe, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, everyone who is practicing sin is a slave of sin" (verse 34).

Anyone who serves sin is in bondage to sin. Who and what holds them in bondage to their sins? Satan and his lies hold them in bondage (verses 43-45). The only escape from that bondage is through Jesus Christ.

If we remain and live in the Truth of Jesus Christ, we will be free from bondage to the ways of Satan and his world. We will be able to recognize Satan's lies and reject his false doctrines. When we have this spiritual understanding, we know that we are abiding in Jesus Christ. The apostle John wrote, "And **we know that we are of God**, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And **we know** that the Son of God is come, and has **given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true**, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:19-20).

John makes it absolutely clear that those who truly know Jesus Christ will be keeping His commandments and walking as He walked. "...And by this *standard* we are knowing that we have known Him, if we are keeping His commandments. Anyone who is saying, 'I have known Him,' and is not keeping His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. On the other hand, anyone who may be keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. By this *means* we are knowing that we are in Him. Anyone who is claiming to abide in Him, is obligating himself to walk, even as He Himself also walked" (I John 2:3-6, AT).

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The apostle John is here confirming Jesus' own words to the Jews at the temple. The unmistakable sign and standard that identifies true Christians is their faithful keeping of the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ. When we keep the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ, we are showing that we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we know that we are in Christ Jesus and He is in us. "And the one who is keeping His commandments abides in Him, and He in him; and by this *very thing* we are knowing that He is dwelling in us, by the Spirit which He gave to us" (I John 3:24, AT).

We Are Sanctified Through the Perfect Truth of God's Word--Not Through Half-truths

Jesus Christ asked God the Father to sanctify every believer through His Truth. He prayed, **"Sanctify them through your Truth; Your Word is the Truth....And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they may be sanctified in the Truth"** (John 17:17, 19).

These words of Jesus are profound! Remember, Jesus also said that He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). Since Jesus is the Truth, we are sanctified in Him (I Cor. 1:2) and through His name (I Cor. 6:11) by God the Father (Jude 1).

Only through Jesus Christ can we be sanctified by the Truth of God. It is through Jesus that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, called "the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit is the power by which God the Father and Jesus Christ are able to teach us "all things" through the Word of Truth (John 14:26). We are sealed with the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 1:22) and sanctified through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16).

Notice! God's Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of Truth," not "the Spirit of half-truths." We cannot be sanctified to the God of absolute Truth, nor to Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, by false doctrines and half-truths. **Half-truths are half-lies.** Half-truths and half-lies cannot reveal the Truth of God's Word to us. If we blend lies with the Truth of God, we cannot be sanctified to God! A lie can never sanctify one to God the Father, Who is absolute Truth.

Liars will not have a part with God! **Liars are excluded from God's presence. They will be expelled from His coming kingdom and destroyed!** "But the cowards, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and the murderers, and the fornicators, and the sorcerers, and the idolaters, and **ALL THE LIARS**, *shall have* their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8, AT).

God will destroy all false teachers of lies! Those who teach lies are the servants and followers of Satan the devil, who is the originator of lies! Satan the devil is the one who inspires doctrines which are a blend of half-truths and half-lies. Such misleading doctrines have been used by Satan from the beginning.

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In Jesus' day, the religious leaders of Judaism had the Truth of God's Word available to them in the Scriptures. In fact, the Jews were entrusted with preserving the Scriptures of the Old Testament. More importantly, they had direct access to the Truth of God in the person of Jesus Christ. He was the living Word of God, their Savior and Redeemer, dwelling in the flesh among them, but they rejected Him (John 1:11).

How many times did Jesus say to them, "Have you never read [in God's Word]...?" or "It is written [in God's Word]...." Rather than believing God's Word, which is the Truth, they preferred to believe the lies of Satan the devil. Rather than living by God's Truth, they practiced their ungodly traditions, which they held in higher esteem than the Word of God. They chose to keep their traditions and their positions of power rather than to humble themselves and accept the Son of God. They refused to repent, even when Jesus warned that they were actually following Satan the devil. Jesus boldly declared, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not" (John 8:44-45).

Like these Jewish leaders of old, most people in the world today are following lies rather than the truth! Think about this! Aren't the religious holidays of the world--Christmas, Easter, Halloween--all founded in lies? Yes, they are! These religious delusions are some of the myths and fables that Satan has used to deceive the whole world. True Christians neither teach nor follow such myths. The apostle Peter wrote, "For we have not followed, *for our authority*, cleverly concocted myths [fables], when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we have been eyewitnesses of His magnificent glory" (II Pet. 1:16, AT).

The world clings to the myths of its holidays rather than loving the reality of the Word of God and His commandments. This love of lies is one reason that the apostasy in the world is progressing at such an alarming rate. People have been prepared well in advance to accept and believe lies. When the apostasy nears its climax and the greatest lies are taught, people of all nations will accept them with open minds. That **GRAND DECEPTION IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!** The final deception will be a one-world government with a one-world religion--one great Babylonian governmental and religious system set up in rebellion against God. This world-wide deception will be the greatest apostasy ever perpetuated! The grand finale of Satan's deception will be the "mark of the Beast," accompanied by open worship and adoration of Satan as God. All those who refuse to worship Satan and the Beast will be sentenced to die (Rev. 13). Satan's **GRAND DECEPTION** will be so powerful and so compelling that the armies of the world will literally fight against Jesus Christ when He returns (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:11-19).

While the "Great Apostasy" is developing in the world, an apostasy is also rapidly taking root within many churches of God. It is most visibly evident in one of the largest church of God organizations. The old false doctrines of Satan are

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being introduced and labeled as "new understanding" in doctrine, although this "new understanding" clearly contradicts the true teachings of Scripture! As a result, more and more brethren who belong to this church organization are becoming confused! Taking advantage of confusion is one of Satan's oldest tactics. Confusion paves the way for apostasy by causing Christians to doubt the true teachings of Scripture so that lies and false doctrines can replace Truth.

The barrage of doctrinal changes has caused such mind-numbing confusion that many church members have given up trying to hold on to the Truth. With so many new teachings, it has become too difficult and too complicated to "prove all things," as the Word of God commands. They simply accept what they are told to believe, reasoning, "After all, isn't this church organization the only true Church of God on earth? Therefore, we should accept what we are taught. It has to be right, because God is guiding and inspiring the leaders of this church."

It is hard to justify error and have coherent doctrine. That is why there is confusion. Mixing lies with truth produces confusion. This spiritual condition is allowed to exist in churches when ministers and members are not humbly and earnestly praying and studying the Word of God. In all too many cases, these churchgoers have not been studying and praying at all--perhaps for a good many years. They have deceived themselves into believing that their physical presence in worship services and their allegiance to a corporate church organization are all that is necessary for salvation. This is precisely where Satan and his false ministers want the brethren to be. When church members fall into this condition, Satan has fertile grounds, indeed, to make the seeds of his apostasy grow.

When such lackadaisical attitudes prevail, it is easy to bring in false doctrines! The subtle teachers of doctrinal lies know that they will not meet much resistance. By skillful use of clever arguments over a period of time, faith and belief in the Truth will be eroded and any resistance will be only a mild protest, rather than a fiery denunciation of their diabolical lies.

Sadly, too many ministers and brethren are afraid to resist the "new" false teachings. They have been convinced by their trusted leaders that God will deny them salvation if they refuse to accept these new church doctrines. Others are so spiritually paralyzed and weakened that they can no longer make a stand for the Truth. They do not have the spiritual strength to resist the growing pressure of false doctrine. Some may feel that by passively continuing to attend church services and biding their time, so to speak, the problem will eventually go away--but it will not. All who continue to passively coexist with false doctrines are compromising their love of God and their love of the Truth.

Each Christian who is truly part of the spiritual Church of God is commanded by the Word of God to make sure that he or she is in the true faith. **"Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves..."** (I Cor. 13:5).

**True Christians Are to Stand For
the Truth and Love of God**

When confronted by evil forces, David asked, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3.)

This question is what many Christians are asking today. It is evident that the foundations of Truth within the churches of God are being destroyed. What should true Christians do in these circumstances? How can we combat this assault of deception and evil? How can we remain faithful to God the Father and Jesus Christ?

We must put on the whole armor of God! "Because of this [Satan and all the spiritual wickedness and darkness in high places, verses 11-12] take up *for yourselves* the full armor of God, so that **you may be able to withstand in the evil day**, and having done all things, to stand [steadfast]. **STAND THEREFORE**, having your loins girt about with TRUTH, and having on the breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Eph. 6:13-14, AT).

We must stand for the Truth of God on the foundation of Jesus Christ! The true spiritual Church of God is to stand as the pillar and ground of God's Truth in the midst of an evil and wicked generation! The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "These things I write unto you, hoping to come unto you shortly: but if I delay long, that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in **the house of God, which is the church of the Living God, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH**" (I Tim. 3:14-15, AT).

The apostle John shows us how to combat all deceivers with God's **Truth and Love**. His entire second epistle is devoted to contrasting the **Truth** and the **Love** of God with the "many deceivers" and their **false doctrines**. Here is the author's translation of the Second Epistle of John. **Truth and Love** have been highlighted in **bold type** to contrast with **deceivers and antichrist**:

1. The Elder to the Chosen Lady and her children, whom I am **loving** in **Truth**, and not only I alone, but also all those who have **known the Truth**,
2. For the sake of **the Truth which is dwelling in us**, and shall be with us forever.
3. Grace, mercy, and peace shall be with us from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, **in Truth and Love**.
4. I rejoiced exceedingly, that I have found of your children **walking in Truth**, exactly as we received *the* commandment from the Father.
5. And now, I am beseeching you, Lady, not as though I am writing a new commandment to you, but that which we were observing from the beginning, that **we should be loving one another**.

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6. And this is **the Love**, that we should be walking according to His commandments. This is the commandment, exactly as you heard from the beginning, in order that you might be walking in it.
7. Because **many deceivers have entered into the world, those who are not confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh--this one is the deceiver and the antichrist.**
8. You watch out for yourselves, in order that you may not lose the things we have accomplished, rather *that* we may be receiving the full reward.
9. **Anyone who is transgressing and is not abiding in the teachings of the Christ does not have God. The one who is abiding in the teachings of the Christ, this one has both the Father and the Son.**
10. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not be receiving this one into your house, and do not be saying to him, "Greetings!"**
11. **Because anyone who is saying "Greetings!" to him is partaking in his evil works.**
12. I have many things to write, but I do not wish to convey *these things to you* with paper and ink, but I am hoping to come to you and speak face to face, in order that our joy may be completely full.
13. The children of your chosen sister salute you. Amen.

John's admonitions make it clear that these deceivers were already operating within the churches of God while John was still alive! John clearly forbids Christians to receive **any deceivers**, including those who rise up within a church of God. If we do receive these deceivers, we are partakers with them in their deceit and sin. As the followers of Jesus Christ, we are to hold fast the pure doctrines of **Truth and Love**.

If the brethren were commanded not to receive any deceivers, how much less their doctrine! Consider this: John does not tell the brethren that they will lose salvation if they refuse to accept false doctrines which those deceivers were teaching. On the contrary, loss of salvation would assuredly be the end result if the brethren accepted these deceptions and forsook the teachings of Jesus Christ!

Today, deceivers are again rising up within the churches of God and are promulgating their false, satanic doctrines. They are speaking evil of the Truth, just as the apostle Peter warned. "But there were false prophets also among the people, as indeed **there shall be false teachers AMONG YOU** [from within your congregations], **who shall stealthily introduce damnable heresies** [denial of the human nature of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the Cross, the veneration of idols, that the church is the Kingdom of God, that one is born again now, Christmas and Easter] **and who are themselves even denying the Lord who bought them, and are bringing swift destruction upon themselves.**

"And many people shall follow as authoritative their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [the Greek means

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"blasphemed"]. Also, through insatiable greed they will exploit you for gain, *with* enticing messages..." (II Pet. 2:1-3, *AT*).

Are you accepting and believing the clever arguments and convincing phraseology of these persuasive false teachers? If you find yourself giving in to the pressure, you had better ask God for the spiritual strength and courage to make your stand for Jesus Christ and the Truth of God!

Faith and righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit are two powerful defenses that God will give you to conquer deception and false doctrines and keep yourself in fellowship with Christ Jesus and God the Father.

Chapter Six

Christians Must Not Fellowship With Those Who Depart From the Doctrine of Jesus Christ

The New Testament clearly shows that false apostles were working within the churches of God while the true apostles of Jesus Christ were still alive! There were "many deceivers" bringing in false teachings concocted through deceitfully handling the Word of God. These blessedly-true-sounding teachings were cloaked in the terminology of "new understanding" or "new light," but they were actually teachings that originated in the ancient spiritual darkness of Satan the devil.

The same deception is taking place in the churches of God today! The purveyors of deceit are drinking straight out of the "golden cup" of spiritual fornication from the hand of that old harlot, "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and the Abominations of the Earth." While these deceivers drink the wine of false doctrines, and proclaim Satan's ancient fables as "new light," they are leading the brethren of Jesus Christ into spiritual darkness.

God has called us out of that darkness! We are not to go back into it! The apostle Paul said that he was called to preach the true Gospel of God, "...to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and *from* the power of Satan to the *power* of God..." (Acts 26:18, AT).

Jesus Christ warned us not to partake of Satan's darkness by allowing our minds to be corrupted with false teachings. He knows that believing Satan's lies will rob us of our spiritual understanding. He warned, "The light of the body is the eye; therefore, if your eye be single *in purpose*, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye be evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. **Therefore, if the light that is in you is darkness, HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS**" (Mat. 6:22-23, AT).

Many Christians in New Testament times failed to heed the warnings of Jesus Christ and His apostles against deceivers who would bring in false doctrines. In his epistle to the early Christians, the apostle Jude warned of false brethren who had "crept in unawares." These false teachers were the ones who turned the true Gospel of Jesus Christ into another gospel altogether by their perverse doctrines. These deceivers worked their way into positions of power and influence in the churches and then subtly began to subvert the brethren. After the death of the apostles, the subversion of the apostolic church of God was so swift, so complete and so thorough that Jesse Lyman Hurlbut wrote in his book *The Story of the Christian Church* of the vast changes in the church, "We name the last generation

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of the first century, from 68 to 100 A.D., 'The Age of Shadows'....For fifty years after St. Paul's life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises about 120 A. D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul" (p. 42).

The churches of God were overcome by the spiritual darkness of false doctrines. So many Christians were deceived into accepting the "new" doctrines that those who refused were looked upon as heretics! Those Christians who were faithful to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ were driven out of the local churches (III John). They left the organizations of men in order to love and serve God in the light of Jesus Christ.

Only the church at Ephesus was able to withstand the deceptive teachings of false apostles. Jesus said to the Ephesian Christians, "I know your works and your labor and your endurance, and that you cannot bear them that are evil, and you have tried them who declared *themselves* to be apostles and are not, but you did find them *to be* liars" (Rev. 2:2, AT).

Like the brethren in Ephesus, we are to test and prove the teachings of ministers and apostles who claim to bring us the doctrine of God! If we fail to recognize the false apostles and their teachings, we will succumb to their evil influence and be overtaken by spiritual darkness. The apostle John warned that **we cannot have fellowship with God if we are walking in spiritual darkness.** "And this is the message which we have heard from Him and we are declaring to you, the fact that God is Light and there is not any darkness in Him at all. If we proclaim that we are having fellowship with Him, and we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and **we are not practicing the Truth**" (I John 1:5-6, AT).

Only by walking in the light of the Truth can we have fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Those who claim to know God but do not practice the Truth are only deceiving themselves.

Why Does God Allow Deception and Apostasy?

Numerous passages in the New Testament describe the insidious deception that led the early churches of God to apostatize from the truth. Apostasy is the end result of rejecting the light of the true doctrines of Jesus Christ and embracing the false doctrines of spiritual darkness. This degenerate spiritual condition is allowed to develop when a church becomes spiritually lax and lethargic. Christians who have lost their love of the Truth and who fail to "prove all things" by the Word of God can easily be deceived by the counterfeit doctrines of Babylon. When these false doctrines are presented as "new understanding" by so-called apostles and top-ranking ministers, most church members obediently accept them as the doctrines of Jesus Christ. This loyal obedience to church authority is *demanded* in churches where the ministry exercises lordship over the brethren. Without realizing it, the brethren have exchanged their love of God and their faith and loyalty to His Word

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for a false faith in corruptible men who promise salvation to all who abide by their teachings and are loyal to their organizations.

Such misplaced loyalty and obedience actually is idolatry. The subservient obeisance demanded by arrogant ministers in corporate church organizations has replaced the true love and worship of God the Father and Jesus Christ in Spirit and in Truth. These exalted church leaders have placed themselves between the brethren and God and have deceived lower-rank ministers and the brethren into trusting in the words and actions of men, rather than trusting in God's Word and His power. True to the Scripture, "They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof; from such turn away!" (II Tim. 3:5.)

The apostle Paul personally warned the elders from Ephesus that deceivers would enter the church after he was gone. In a special meeting with the elders at Miletus, Paul also declared that even *some of them*, who had been ordained as **ministers of Jesus Christ**, would begin to subvert their brethren in the church (Acts 20:28-30).

Later, when Paul was in prison, he wrote a letter to warn the entire church in Ephesus about deceitful men who would attempt to lead them astray. He exhorted, "**Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience. THEREFORE BE NOT PARTAKERS WITH THEM!**" (Eph. 5:6-7.)

Paul's words show that these men were working within the church. They may even have been highly trusted by the congregation. But Paul was inspired by God to warn the brethren not to partake of the errors of these deceivers. Those who did not heed Paul's warning were led away from Jesus Christ and God the Father into the darkness of apostasy.

Why did God allow the New Testament churches to be led into apostasy? Why didn't God intervene to keep false teachers and false apostles from subverting the brethren?

The apostle Paul gives the answer in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "For there **must be** [necessity] also heresies among you, **that they which are approved may be made manifest among you**" (I Cor. 11:19, AT).

Paul tells us very clearly that God allows false doctrines to arise within His churches in order to **prove who is truly serving Him**. Christians who are grounded and built up in the Word of God will be able to discern false teachers and will reject them. No deceiver will be able to seduce them into forsaking the Truth of God.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul urged the brethren to grow in the knowledge of Christ Jesus and not to yield to the doctrines of false teachers. "That we may no longer be infants, being tossed and carried about by the wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in *their* craftiness [their cunning words and

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deceptive doctrines], with a view to the systematizing of the error" (Eph. 4:14, AT).

This translation of Paul's words conveys the literal meaning of the Greek text. These deceivers were being inspired by Satan to organize their false teachings into "authoritative" doctrines even before the death of Paul. This body of beliefs later became the official creed of the Catholic Church.

The way for true Christians to avoid being deceived by these counterfeit doctrines is to be "...holding the Truth in love, *so that* we may grow up into Him in all things, *into* the Christ, Who is the Head [of the Church]" (Eph. 4:15, AT).

We Must Refute Heresy With Sound Doctrine

Paul commanded Titus, a fellow minister, to resist false doctrines and to **refute them with sound doctrine!** In his epistle to Titus, Paul wrote that a true minister of God must be "holding fast the faithful Word [the Truth of God] as he has been taught [the original teachings of Jesus Christ as taught by the apostle Paul], so that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision; whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teachings things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake....This is a true witness. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.

"Not giving heed to Jewish fables [Jewish/Egyptian philosophy, such as Philo and other philosophers taught, which included a triune godhead], and commandments of men, that turn from the Truth. Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto these who are defiled [with false doctrines] and unbelieving is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work [of spiritual growth (Eph. 2:8-10)] *they are* reprobate" (Titus 1:9-16, AT).

True ministers and faithful brethren in the churches of God must be prepared to refute false doctrines with sound doctrine from the Word of God. False teachers will not be able to subvert those churches of God where the ministers and brethren resist them. These deceivers will seek a following in other congregations where the brethren are not so well grounded in the Word of God.

In the first century there were false teachers of antichrist doctrines who left the faithful congregations of God because they were not able to subvert the brethren. The apostle John wrote, "Little children, it is the last time, and exactly as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, *yet* even now many antichrists have risen up, from which *fact* we are knowing that it is the last time. They went out from among us, but they were not of us; because if they were of us, they would have remained with us; nevertheless *they left us*, that they should be exposed, *to show* that they all were not of us" (I John 2:18-19, AT).

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These deceivers continued to preach their false doctrines in congregations where the brethren did not resist and refute them. When the antichrist teachers had gained positions of power and authority in these churches, they forced out the true believers. This diabolical apostasy was well underway in the lifetime of the apostle John, who was inspired by God to write, "I wrote to the church, but Diotrophes (he is the one who is loving to be chief among them) is not receiving us. On account of this very thing, if I come, I will bring to his remembrance the actions which he is practicing with evil words, bringing unjustified charges against us; and he is not being satisfied with these things, for he himself neither receives the brethren, and those who wish *to receive the brethren*, he is forbidding and is casting them out of the church" (III John 9-10, AT).

What a paradox! The false ministers of Satan, claiming to be ministers of righteousness, were now exercising control over the churches of God! The true brethren of Jesus Christ were being excommunicated by these false apostles! Brethren who were faithful to the original teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles could no longer fellowship in their local church congregations!

God allowed this apostasy to take place in His first-century churches in order to separate those who would hold fast His Truth from those who would follow Satan's lies. Those faithful brethren who opposed the deceivers and their false doctrines were forcibly expelled. This action served to fully separate the true believers and keep their faith from being eroded by the subtle influence of false doctrines.

When false doctrines begin to enter the churches of God, it is the responsibility of every Christian who loves God and His Truth to reject those false teachings and refute them with the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ. But when false teachers and false ministers gain control over a church of God and they cannot be expelled, removed or replaced with righteous teachers and ministers, then we are commanded by the Word of God to withdraw ourselves from them.

In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul shows that true Christians should separate themselves from those who do not teach and practice the true doctrine of Jesus Christ. Paul declared, "**If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness** [according to the Truth of God]; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings [false suppositions], perverse disputings [devious arguments] of men of corrupt minds [corrupted by philosophy and false theology], and destitute of the Truth [because they believe and accept lies, and handle the Word of God deceitfully], supposing that gain [large membership, buildings, cathedrals, colleges, political power] is godliness: **FROM SUCH WITHDRAW YOURSELF**" (I Tim. 6:3-5).

Does this description fit the congregation you attend? Does the church you attend have vain, proud, pretentious ministers, who use lofty theological terms but who really do not understand the Bible? Is your church filled with doctrinal questions and strifes that are leading to intimidation and threats? Is your church

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being misled by false suppositions and devious arguments of men of corrupt minds? Does your church have teachers who are destitute of the Truth? Does your church measure spiritual standing with God by numbers of members, buildings and colleges? Are false doctrines being preached and accepted by your church as "official doctrines of faith"? Are the Truth and the love of God, the wholesome words and doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ, being replaced with the half-truths and half-lies of Satan?

When any church of God sinks into this degenerate spiritual state, true Christians are commanded by God to withdraw themselves! We are commanded by God to reject all false teachers! We are forbidden by the Word of God to receive them! We are not to listen to their false doctrines or fellowship with them!

Yes, these false ministers and false teachers have an appearance of godliness, and their teachings sound blessedly true. But, just as Paul wrote, they have "a form of godliness, but they are denying the power thereof: **FROM SUCH TURN AWAY!**" (II Tim. 3:5.)

The true ministers of God will not preach false half-truths for doctrine. Paul wrote, "For we have not preached ourselves [our own ideas, based on philosophy or false theology], but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:5-6, AT).

Paul taught only the Truth of God and the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. He never compromised with half-truths and half-lies. He was never corrupted by false apostles and false teachers of his day. On the contrary, he opposed them with all his might! Paul describes his confrontation with these false teachers: "...**false brethren, who stealthily came in** to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into bondage; to whom **we did not yield in subjection** [to their so-called authority], no not even for an hour, in order that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:4-5, AT).

Every true Christian should follow the example of Paul. We should not be intimidated by false teachers who attempt to exercise authority over us. We must not yield to these false teachers, but oppose them with all our might!

If we are true Christians, we will imitate our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who refused to compromise with Satan and yield to his evil ways. Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be crucified because He loved God the Father and His righteousness.

Stephen, the first true Christian martyr, refused to compromise during his trial by the Jewish Sanhedrin. After hearing his courageous testimony, the angry religious leaders stopped their ears and gnashed their teeth at him and screamed at him in a frenzy of satanic hatred. Then they mobbed him and dragged him out of the city, where they had him stoned to death. What was his crime in their eyes? He refused to compromise the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Truth of God by

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submitting to their authority and following their teachings! He preferred to die in Christ Jesus rather than to compromise and accept their religious lies and political approval.

All the true apostles of Jesus Christ stood for the Truth. Many of the original apostles died through martyrdom. They endured torturous deaths because they truly loved God with all their hearts, all their minds, all their beings and all their strength. They never compromised the Truth of God to escape persecution and be able to spend the rest of their days in quiet comfort.

Will You Stand for God and His Truth?

During a time of abject apostasy and political disintegration in the kingdom of Israel, King Asa began his reign over the kingdom of Judah. He demolished the idols in his land and commanded the people of Judah to seek God and to keep His commandments. For ten years, God blessed Asa and his people with rest on all sides. When the people of Judah foolishly went back to idolatry, God sent a huge Ethiopian army against them. King Asa besought God for His help, and Judah was victorious over the enemy. Then God told King Asa through the prophet Azariah, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while you be with Him; and if you seek Him, He will be found of you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you....**Be you strong therefore**, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded" (II Chron. 15:2-7).

Then Asa and the princes and people of Judah, joined by many from the kingdom of Israel, "...entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul....for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire; and He was found of them..." (verses 12-15).

They put away their abominable idols and pagan gods. They returned to God and sought Him with their whole hearts. God answered and blessed them, giving them rest from their enemies.

But thirty-six years later, when the king of Israel came up to besiege Judah, Asa turned his back on God and made an alliance with the king of Syria. In his trouble, Asa failed to look to God, thinking he could work out the problem his own way. By hiring the king of Syria to fight his battles, he compromised his standing with God. In this case, he went too far in rejecting God and did not repent. Then Hanani the seer was sent by God to warn Asa and pronounce God's judgment against him. Hanani told Asa, "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the king of Syria has escaped out of your hand.

"Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host [nearly one million men], with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you did rely on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand. **For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of *them* whose**

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heart is perfect toward Him. Herein you have done foolishly: therefore from henceforth you shall have wars" (II Chron. 16:7-9).

Too many Christians are like Asa. They start out with great zeal for the Truth of God and look to Him for strength to do His will. But after a while they grow lax and begin to compromise. When the going gets rough, they forget God and turn to their own devices instead. They put their trust in men, instead of in God. They accept false teachings and pagan beliefs, rather than holding fast the Truth. This willingness to compromise is the reason for the doctrinal changes in the churches of God today. The ministers and members are not relying on God the Father and Jesus Christ. As a result, too many are afraid to take a stand for the Truth and for God!

But God sees our actions and knows our hearts. God expects us to stand for the Truth. If we do, God will be with us. He will never leave us or forsake us, as long as we are seeking Him. The psalmist asked, "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? *or* who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" (Ps. 94:16.)

God is asking you the same question today. Will you make a stand for God? Will you stand against the workers of evil who are operating within the churches of God? Will you have the courage to stand alone, if necessary? Or will you, like Asa, turn your back on God and rely on men, putting your trust in their false doctrines and smooth words? What will you do? Will you stand for God, or fall with sinners?

From the time of the early New Testament church, Christians have had to face this question. Down through the centuries, countless thousands of true Christians were martyred because they refused to compromise the Truth of God. They refused to deny God the Father and Jesus Christ. They were tortured and killed because they refused to believe the doctrine of the Trinity and all the abominable doctrines of the Catholic Church. They were burned, maimed and killed for refusing to submit to the tyranny of the popes and overlordship of the bishops and priests.

In view of their faithfulness, do you think that God is going to give you eternal life if you compromise your calling, His Truth and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Don't deceive yourself! Don't think for one moment that by hiding your eyes from the conflict you can avoid making a decision. If you passively submit to doctrines that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, you have already made your decision. You are compromising the Truth of God!

Christians who compromise the Truth will sooner or later be overcome by false doctrines. If you do not rouse yourself from spiritual apathy, you may have to face Jesus Christ and hear Him say, "I know you not" (Mat. 25:1-12).

The Word of God clearly commands true Christians to withdraw from fellowship with those who would corrupt their beliefs and erode their faith. Faithful brethren who continue to fellowship in the hope of preserving the Truth

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will eventually either fall prey to the deception or be expelled from the church. Those who walk in the light of God's Word can have no fellowship with the workers of darkness and deceit.

We are commanded to separate ourselves from them! We are not to fellowship with them, or we will be partakers of their sins. We are commanded by God to withdraw from fellowship with any church that teaches contrary to the true doctrine of Jesus Christ.

After having withdrawn from a corrupted church of God, a true Christian said, "It is better to live the Truth alone, than to live a lie in a group!" That is a true and profound statement. What will you do? Will *you* choose to be faithful to the Truth of God and to love God the Father and Jesus Christ more than anyone or anything else, even if you must stand alone?

Chapter Seven

God Gives Each Christian the Responsibility to Choose

The Word of God clearly teaches that salvation is a gift to individual Christians because Christ is personally in each one through the begetting of God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. Each Christian is individually responsible to God the Father to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We must believe the Truth and live by it. God will not give us salvation simply because of our physical presence within a corporate church organization.

Each Christian is responsible to work out his or her own salvation through the indwelling power of God's Holy Spirit. Paul commanded the Philippian brethren, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling, **for it is God which works in you** both to will and to do His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

This Scripture clearly shows that each Christian must maintain his or her personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. Every individual will have to give an account of himself or herself to God (Rom. 14:10). We should not compromise our personal relationship with God for the sake of pleasing men. We should not compromise that spiritual relationship for the sake of social fellowship. Remember this Christian testimony, **"It is better to live the Truth alone, than to live a lie in a group."** Those who continue to fellowship in a congregation where false doctrines are being taught—including the diabolical lies of the Trinity—are showing by their presence that they support these deceitful teachings, as much as if they agreed by saying "Amen."

If you continue to fellowship in their assembly, you are giving tacit agreement to their teachings. You are spiritually partaking of their sins, and you cannot have fellowship with Jesus Christ! Paul warned, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons" (I Cor. 10:21).

God Will Not Prevent Us From Choosing Evil

The history of the early churches of God as recorded in the New Testament contains a valuable lesson for us today: God did not personally intervene to stop

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the apostasy in the first century! Neither will God personally intervene to stop the apostasy in His churches today!

From the beginning of this world, God has allowed mankind the freedom to sin. God did not stop Adam and Eve from sinning. God did not keep Cain from killing his brother, nor did God prevent the wickedness of all mankind before the Flood. But when God did choose to intervene and execute His judgment, He sent the Flood to destroy the wicked, and spared only eight persons.

God did not stop human corruption after the Flood. However, He did confound the language of the people to postpone the fullness of evil until the set time in His plan.

God did not intervene to prevent the idolatry of Israel and Judah, but He sent many prophets to warn them, calling them to repent and to return to the true God. Some of the kings and the people repented and chose to follow God. They did so by free choice, not because God forced them to serve Him. God forgave and blessed those who repented, and God will bless us whenever we personally choose to repent and to love Him and His Son Jesus Christ. But if we choose not to repent, God allows us to continue in our sins.

When there is no repentance by corrupted leaders within a church of God, God does not intervene to keep them from apostatizing by teaching false doctrines. When they deliberately choose to embrace the doctrines of Satan and his demons, and teach them as official doctrines, God allows them to practice their error. Because they have chosen myths rather than Truth, God will let them fall.

God Commands Us To Choose Life

God is not now intervening to stop wars, famines, oppression, crime, sexual perversion, and all the evils of mankind. God has not chosen to stop these evils at this time. He has given mankind the responsibility to choose between good and evil.

God has given us free moral agency. We must choose! We are blessed or cursed, and we live or die by our choices! It is God's desire that we choose to love Him and keep His commandments and live. But because God has given each individual free moral agency, each person must make his or her own choice.

Instead of choosing God's righteous ways, most people have chosen the evil ways of Satan and the world. Those who choose to do evil will receive the wages of sin, which is death. But everyone who chooses to love God and live by His Truth will receive eternal life. Here are the choices God has laid before every human being: **"See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it [our goal is the promised Kingdom of God]."**

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"But if your heart turn away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them [this is the meaning of apostasy]; I denounce to you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land [nor shall we enter into the Kingdom of God]....I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life, that both you and your seed may live: that you may love the Lord your God**, and that you may obey His voice, and that you may cleave unto Him: for He is your life [the Author of eternal life], and the length of your days..." (Deut. 30:15-20).

These words, spoken by Moses to the children of Israel in Old Testament times, are especially meaningful for "spiritual Israel" today--those who are the children of Abraham through God's grace and who make up the spiritual Church of God. For those who are in the spiritual Church of God, it is time to make a choice between good and evil--between Truth and error. Within the congregations of God today, evil and false doctrines are again threatening the faith of true believers, and God will not personally intervene. When ministers, leaders and brethren choose to reject the Truth of God and to corrupt themselves with the doctrines of demons, then God allows them to follow their error. That is the lesson God teaches us throughout the Bible! God has made each of us responsible for his or her own choices and actions. God will bless or curse accordingly, but He does not prevent us from choosing error!

If God Himself would personally intervene to stop deception and apostasy, then free moral agency would no longer exist. That is a fact! Free moral agency would no longer be in effect, if God removed the choices He Himself has set before us!

If God would personally keep people from choosing lies, that would defeat the prophecies that God Himself inspired, revealing that sin will come to the full in Satan's "Great Apostasy." This climax of evil and sin can only take place in a world where people are free to choose what they will believe and practice.

In this time of increasing error and growing deception, we who are the spiritual church of God have choices to make. Will we choose the Truth of God or the myths of Satan? God wants to know what is really in our hearts. Do we truly love God the Father and Jesus Christ with our whole being? Do we truly love his Word of Truth, which He has so wonderfully preserved for us? Do we really want to be in the Kingdom of God and live in love with God the Father and Jesus Christ for all eternity?

To those who would be His followers, Jesus Christ made it absolutely clear that the stakes were high and the way was difficult. He said, "Enter in through the narrow gate; because wide is the gate and broad is the way which leads to destruction, and many are they who are entering through it; because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and few are they who are finding it" (Mat. 7:13-14, AT).

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Jesus shows the single-minded devotion that is required of a Christian: "If any one comes to Me and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters--yes, and his own life also--he cannot be My disciple [literal Greek meaning: there is no other possible power to make you His disciple]. And whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple [there is no other possible power to make you His disciple]" (Luke 14:26-27).

Jesus emphasized this truth when He said, **"The one who is loving father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and the one who is loving son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross, and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me"** (Mat. 10:37-38, AT).

These Scriptures clearly show that **the one who is loving social fellowship more than Jesus Christ is not worthy of Him. The one who is accepting the lies of Satan the devil in exchange for the Truth of God is not worthy of Him. The one who does not stand resolutely for Jesus Christ until death is not worthy of Him.**

Until Jesus Christ returns, each of us is personally responsible to God the Father and Jesus Christ for his or her own actions and beliefs. We are being judged individually by God according to our faith and our conduct.

God commands us to love Him wholeheartedly and live by His every Word. If we stray from God and begin to believe and practice error, God will make us aware of our sins in the hope that we may repent and have our sins blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ. But God will not stop us from sinning--not even if we are a top leader or minister in a corporate church organization. Those ministers who choose to preach error and to promulgate lies will be warned by God to repent, but God will not stop them if they choose to follow deception and apostasy!

We Must Accept Our Personal Responsibility

In today's world, people readily blame others for their irresponsibility and their lack of character and self-control. They often blame society, or their mother or father, or the boss, or the police, or others in positions of authority. Because people do not want to accept personal responsibility for their wrong actions, they try to place the blame on others. That is exactly what Adam and Eve did after they sinned. Such excuses have no standing before God and cannot release anyone from his or her personal accountability to God.

Unfortunately, when the leaders of a nation sin, the people also suffer. It is the same in the churches of God. When ministers and church leaders sin by accepting and teaching false doctrines, the brethren suffer by becoming confused and deceived into following error.

When a church reaches this condition, it is important to remember that every Christian is personally accountable to God the Father and Jesus Christ to

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continually be studying the Word and to "prove all things" (II Thes. 5:21). We cannot blame others for deceiving us if we fail to build ourselves up in the Word of God. God has given each Christian the personal responsibility to hold fast the Truth, to grow in grace and knowledge, to follow that which is good, and to love Him with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul and with all the strength.

Chapter Eight

Every Christian Must Be Ready To Defend the Truth

What is our Christian duty before God when we hear false doctrines being preached? Must we submit to church leaders even when they are promoting false doctrines that deny God the Father and Jesus Christ? Should we remain silent while ministers and brethren are being swept headlong into spiritual darkness and apostasy? What did the brethren in the first century do when the churches of God were assaulted by the satanic devices of deception and apostasy?

The apostle Jude wrote to the faithful Christians of his day and proclaimed to them what they must do to combat the evil forces of apostasy. Jude addressed his epistle to the "called saints"--all who were called by God the Father to receive salvation through Jesus Christ. His letter warns of a subtle conspiracy by false teachers working within the churches in an attempt to pervert the true doctrines of Jesus Christ. Jude admonishes every Christian to defend the true doctrines of God which were delivered by Jesus Christ and taught by His true apostles.

Jude's letter contains strong and emphatic words of advice to Christians as to what to do to overcome spiritual assaults by false teachers with their seductive doctrines. Jude declares that these false teachers are not led by the Spirit of God but are motivated by psychic or satanic powers (verse 19). He exhorts us to help our brethren who are being caught up in Satan's deception and apostasy (verses 22-23). Jude's words clearly show that Christians have a personal responsibility to witness to their brethren to save them from spiritual destruction. Here is the author's translation of the epistle of Jude from the Greek text.

The Epistle of Jude

1. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the called *saints*, who have been loved by God *the* Father, and who have been kept in Jesus Christ.
2. Mercy and peace and love to you be multiplied.
3. Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting you to *fervently* fight for the faith which once had been delivered to the saints.
4. Because certain men have crept in stealthily, who a long time ago have been written about, *condemning them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God into

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licentiousness, and are denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. But I am willing myself to put you in remembrance, though you understand this, that the Lord, having once saved a people out of the land of Egypt, the second time destroyed those who did not believe.

6. And the angels, who did not keep their own original domain, but deserted their habitation, He is holding in eternal bonds under darkness unto the judgment of *the* great day.

7. Just as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities surrounding them, in the same behavior as them, had given themselves over to sexual debaucheries, and had gone after strange flesh [sexual beastiality], are themselves exhibited as a *perpetual* example of undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

8. Actually, in the same way also, these are the ones who are themselves dreaming *filthy dreams*; on the one hand, they are defiling the flesh; and on the other hand, they are declaring as invalid *the lordship of God's rule over one's life*, and are blaspheming angels.

9. But Michael the archangel, when he was himself taking issue with the devil, disputing about the body of Moses, did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment against *him*, but said, *The Lord Himself rebuked you!*

10. But these, whatever things they have not understood, they are reviling; yet whatever things they are understanding by instinct, as irrational brute beasts, they are corrupting themselves in these things.

11. Woe to them! Because they have walked in the way of Cain; and for gain, they have wholly given themselves up to Balaam's delusion, and have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

12. These are subversive stains in your love feasts *while* feasting themselves together with you; fearlessly they are feeding themselves. They are clouds without water, which are being driven by the winds; *as* trees of late autumn, which have been uprooted, without *any* fruit, twice dead.

13. As raging wild waves of the sea, who are like foam, frothing up their own ignominious shame; wandering stars, for whom has been reserved the blackest darkness forever!

14. Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, also prophesied of these, proclaiming, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His holy saints,

15. To execute judgment against all of them, and to convict all of those who are ungodly concerning all of their works of ungodliness which they have impiously committed; and *to execute judgment* concerning all of the hard, *cruel* things which ungodly sinners spoke against Him.

16. These are complainers *and* critics, who are themselves walking after their own lusts; their mouths are speaking great swelling words, flattering persons for the sake of advantage.

17. But you, beloved, call to remembrance the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,

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18. Because they were saying to you that in the last time there will be mockers, who are themselves walking according to their own ungodly lusts.

19. These are the ones who are causing division; *they are* psychic [*using psychic powers*], not having the Spirit of God.

20. But you, beloved, are building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

21. *So that* you keep yourselves in the love of God, *while* you are yourselves expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22. Now on the one hand, show mercy on those who are themselves doubting;

23. On the other hand, save others with fear, snatching them out of the fire, hating even the garment which has been defiled by the flesh.

24. But to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to bring *you* in the presence of His own glory, blameless in exceeding joy,

25. To the only wise God our Savior, be *the* glory and greatness, *the* might and authority, even now, and into all the ages of eternity.
AMEN.

We Must Individually Choose To Remain in the Truth

Jude's inspired words reveal that we are individually responsible as Christians to show our brethren who are being deceived by false teachers that their "wonderful new doctrines" are contrary to the Scriptures. We are to plead with our brethren to turn from their error and repent, as Jude instructs in verses 22-25. Because it is not possible to repent while continuing to fellowship with an apostatizing church, we should encourage them to withdraw themselves and trust God in faith.

Those who truly desire to walk in the light of God's Word can have no fellowship with those who are being blinded by spiritual darkness. God commands His people to separate themselves from the seductive lies and sinful practices of Babylon the Great! In the book of Revelation we read, **"Come out of her, My people, that you may not have fellowship in her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have followed her and *have reached* as far as heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteousnesses. Render to her as she has rendered to you, and double to her double, according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix *back* to her double!"** (Rev. 18:4-6, AT.)

True Christians are commanded to come out of Babylon the Great, the mother of seductive myths, spiritual fornication and the abominations of the world. Those who worship God in Spirit and in Truth can have nothing to do with the deceptive doctrines of Babylon the Great, the nurturer of all satanic lies. True believers cannot fellowship with those who teach such myths. If we receive them, we are partakers of their evil fruits and we cannot remain in God the Father's grace. If we accept and practice the ungodly doctrines of the mother adulteress

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and her whoring daughters, we will receive her plagues of punishment from the hands of God. We will forfeit the gift of eternal life that God has promised to all who are faithful to Him.

God has made it His responsibility to bring us to salvation through Jesus Christ, to give us His Spirit, to give us understanding, to fill us with His love, if we hunger and thirst for it. But God does not personally intervene to keep us from being exposed to false doctrines. Instead, He has given us the Truth of His Word in order that we may recognize false doctrines and refute them. He has provided "the Spirit of the Truth" to lead us, to guide us and to teach us the truth of all things pertaining to eternal life through Jesus Christ. We will not be deceived by false doctrines if we are earnestly studying and seeking the Truth of God's Word with the help of God's Holy Spirit. Although we will not understand everything perfectly, we will be growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God has given us the freedom to choose life or death, good or evil. Since He has given us free moral agency, God will not stop us from making our own choices. If we choose to sin, that is our choice. If top-ranking ministers in a church of God choose to sin, God allows them to do so. God will not personally correct the church leaders if they choose to depart from the Truth. God will not prevent corruption from within a church organization if its leaders choose to embrace false doctrines and practice pagan customs. If there is no desire to love God and His Truth, and to keep His commandments, then God will let those leaders, and all who choose to follow them, fall into the ditch of spiritual darkness, because they have forsaken Him. That is God's judgment.

As individual Christians, we need to take heed to the admonitions and warnings of our Lord Jesus Christ and His true apostles. We need to be grounded and built up in the Word of God in order to resist the corrupting influences of false doctrines. It is our individual Christian responsibility to diligently study the Word of God in order to discern Truth from error, lest we be deceived into accepting false doctrines.

Paul admonished the Hebrew brethren because they were lax and negligent in their personal Christian responsibility. These Christians were spiritually immature in their understanding because they had not been diligently grounding themselves in the Word of God. Paul declared, "For when, because of the time, you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again what are the very fundamental beginnings of the oracles of God; and have become such as ones having need of milk, and not of strong meat [solid food]. Because everyone who is partaking of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness: for he is an infant. But strong meat [solid food] is for those who are of full age [spiritually mature], who on account of habit have exercised the senses, having *the capacity* for distinguishing both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14, AT).

It is God's purpose to bring us to spiritual maturity, fully conforming us to the perfect character of Jesus Christ, that we also may be born into His divine family and be His children for ever. But we cannot become spiritually mature if

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we continue to feed only on the "milk" of God's Word. We must earnestly seek to understand the full Truth of His Word--**every word of God**--in order that we may grow spiritually. Then we will be able to discern between good and evil, and we will not be deceived by clever arguments and subtle reasonings of false teachers. We will be able to recognize their false doctrines and refute them. If we love God and His truth, we will withdraw from fellowship with those who are teaching and accepting false doctrines under the guise of "new understanding." We will know that these doctrinal changes are not being inspired by God.

True Christian Fellowship Is With God the Father and Jesus Christ

In all the conflict and confusion over doctrinal changes in the churches of God, God is working out His purpose! God the Father and Jesus Christ will never forsake those who love the Truth. God the Father will bring us to spiritual maturity if we are faithful to His Word. Jesus Christ will not forsake us if we choose to leave an apostatizing organization so that we can hold fast to His teachings and keep His commandments. Remember this testimony: **IT IS BETTER TO LIVE THE TRUTH ALONE, THEN TO LIVE A LIE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHERS.**

True Christian fellowship begins with personal communion with God the Father and Jesus Christ through the power of God's Holy Spirit. The apostle John wrote, "That which we have seen and have heard, we are reporting to you, in order that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly **our fellowship is with the Father and with His own Son, Jesus Christ**" (I John 1:3, AT).

We must "worship God in Spirit and in Truth" because God is Spirit. This true spiritual fellowship is not a once-a-week event but a constant ongoing relationship as we daily seek to live by every word of God. Jesus said, "It has been written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God' " (Mat. 4:4, AT).

Fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ cannot be granted by any church organization. This fellowship through the Holy Spirit is a direct gift from God to every true Christian. It is based on the personal covenant with God that every true believer enters into at baptism.

This spiritual relationship with God transcends any earthly covenant. It is not a temporary fleshly union, as is the marriage covenant, but an eternal spiritual union in which our hearts and minds become one with God the Father and Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. This intimate spiritual fellowship with God is His gift to every Christian, but it is our responsibility to keep ourselves in that fellowship by continuing to walk in the light of His Word. Then we are truly in spiritual union with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

This personal spiritual relationship in which each Christian is individually joined to God the Father and Jesus Christ is called the New Covenant. It is individually renewed each year at the New Testament Passover when each believer

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partakes of the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I am saying to you, Unless you shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and shall have drunk His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day.

"For My flesh truly is food, and My blood truly is drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood, abides [lives and remains] in Me, and I in him. As the Living Father has sent Me, and I am living by the Father, even so the one who eats Me, he also shall live by Me" (John 6:53-57, AT).

The Passover ceremony is the renewal of the eternal covenant between each Christian and Jesus Christ and God the Father. This covenant relationship, which is the basis for our fellowship, is made possible through God the Father's love for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who is believing on [Greek *eis*, into] Him may not perish, but may have eternal life" (John 3:16, AT).

The fullness of God's love is expressed in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, Who willingly gave Himself for us! Jesus Christ Himself, on the night before His crucifixion, made it absolutely clear that the Father loves us. Jesus declared, "In that day [after Jesus' resurrection and ascension] you shall ask in My name; and I am not telling you that I will beseech the Father for you, **for the Father Himself is loving you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.** I came forth from the Father and have come into the world, again I am leaving the world and I am going to the Father" (John 16:26-28, AT).

God the Father Himself sent Jesus Christ to be our Savior because He loves us! God the Father Himself has personally invited us to receive salvation through His Son. Jesus said, "No one is able to come to Me, unless the Father who has sent Me draw him..." (John 6:44, AT). Think of it! **God the Father, the greatest Being in the universe, has personally called us to inherit eternal life as His children! He Himself has begotten us with the earnest of eternal life by His Holy Spirit!** The apostle Paul wrote, "...In Whom also after having heard, you were sealed with that **Holy Spirit of promise**, which is the **earnest of our inheritance...**" (Eph. 1:13-14, AT).

The apostle John expounded this truth in his first epistle: "In this way, the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this *act* is THE LOVE--not that we have loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our own sins. Beloved, if God so loved us in this manner, we also are duty-bound to love one another....

"And we have known and have believed the love which God has towards us. GOD IS LOVE, and the one who is dwelling in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. By this *spiritual indwelling* [of God's Holy Spirit], the love has been perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because even as He is, so also are we in this world.

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"There is no fear in the love. But perfect love is casting out fear, because fear has torment; and the one who is fearing has not been made perfect in the love. We are loving Him, because He loved us first" (I John 4:9-11, 16-19, AT).

If we continue in this true fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, we need have no fear. God will not forsake us as long as we remain faithful to His Truth. If we defend the Truth, we may have to stand alone for a while, but we will always have fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ. God loves us and He will be with us. When a few brethren are able to fellowship and study God's Word together, God will be with them. Jesus Christ has given His promise that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, there He will be in the midst (Mat. 18:20).

Will We Be Numbered Among the Faithful?

At the present time God is judging His churches and separating the sheep from the goats. This separation must take place in order to preserve the Truth among those who love God and choose to remain faithful to His Word.

Every true Christian is being tried and tested to see if he or she truly loves God the Father and Jesus Christ. Jesus said, **"The one having My commandments and who is keeping them, that is the one who is loving Me; and the one who is loving Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will be loving him and will be manifesting Myself to him....If anyone is loving Me, he will be keeping My words, and My Father will be loving him; and We will come to him, and We will make Our abode with him. The one who is not loving Me is not keeping My words; and the word which you are hearing is not Mine, but the Father's Who has sent Me"** (John 14:21, 23-24, AT).

Jesus Christ has given us the true doctrines of God. If we love Him, we will remain steadfast in His teachings, knowing that we are building our lives upon the only sure foundation. Paul shows that we can only receive the gift of eternal life by building upon the foundation laid by Jesus Christ. "For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus the Christ. Now if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, *or* wood, grass or stubble, each one's work will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because by fire it is revealed. And each one's work, the fire will prove what sort it is. If anyone's work abides which he built *on the foundation of Jesus Christ*, he shall receive a reward. If anyone's work be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but himself shall be saved, but so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:11-15, AT).

Paul's inspired words reveal that we are being individually judged as Christians according to the works that we are now building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. God will not give us an eternal reward if we are not building true works of righteousness that will withstand the fiery trials that He allows to come upon us to test and try us.

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The apostle Peter wrote of these trials, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you, *which is* coming upon you to test you, as if some strange thing is happening to you. But to the degree that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice! so that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly! If you are being reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the *spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you; on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

"Assuredly, let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as an overlording busybody in other people's lives. Yet if anyone *is suffering* as a Christian, he should not be ashamed, but in this case let him glorify God! Because it is time for judgment to have begun with the household of God, and if it first *begins* with us, what shall be the end of those who are not obeying the Gospel of God? And if the righteous are being saved with much difficulty, what shall become of the ungodly and *the* sinner? For this reason also, those who are suffering according to the will of God, let them be committing their souls in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (I Pet. 4:12-19, AT).

Peter tells us not to be discouraged or disheartened by these fiery trials. We must let nothing persuade us to turn aside from following Jesus Christ. If we suffer because we choose to remain faithful to His teachings, we will be richly rewarded at His coming. Let us rejoice in this promise!

Peter reminds us that Jesus Christ Himself suffered because He was obedient to the Truth, and we also should be willing to endure persecution. If we are true Christians, we will follow the example of our Lord and Master. "Because this is acceptable, if for the sake of conscience towards God, anyone is enduring sorrows, suffering unjustly. For what credit is there, if sinning and being beaten [punished] you endure it? But if *while* doing good and suffering you endure it, this *is* acceptable with God. For to this you were called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow after *Him* in His own footsteps" (I Pet. 2:19-21, AT).

Are you willing to follow the example of Jesus Christ by remaining faithful to the Truth of God, even if it brings persecution from your closest friends and members of your own family? Are you willing to hold fast to the true teachings of Jesus Christ even if you must withdraw from fellowship with your local church brethren who are leaving the Truth? Is your membership in a church organization more important to you than worshipping God the Father in Spirit and in Truth?

God is testing every true Christian to see if each one truly loves Him more than anyone or anything else in his or her life! Each of us must make that choice! God will strengthen us and see us through whatever trials we may experience, if we choose to remain faithful to Him and His Word.

What God Requires of His Ministers

God is also trying and testing every minister to determine who truly loves God and His Word. God is making a separation between those ministers who faithfully preach His Word in truth and love, and those who are hirelings seeking position and power.

Every minister of Jesus Christ needs to examine his own heart and mind to honestly evaluate his own personal motives for being in the ministry. This is the self-examination that the apostle Peter was required to undergo. Every minister should apply this Scriptural test to himself and his own circumstances, and ask himself the same questions that Jesus asked the apostle Peter.

"Therefore after they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love Me [*agapee*, meaning divine love] more than these [the other apostles and disciples]?' And he said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I have affection for You [*philoo*, meaning deep personal love].' He said to him, '**Feed My lambs!**'

"He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you love Me [*agapee*, meaning divine love]?' He answered Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I have affection for You [*philoo*, meaning a deep personal love].' He said to him, '**Shepherd My sheep!**'

"He said to him the third time, 'Simon, *son* of Jonas, do you have affection for Me [*philoo*, meaning a deep personal love]?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you have affection for Me [*philoo*, meaning a deep personal love]?' and said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I have affection for You [*philoo*, meaning a deep personal love].' Jesus said to him, '**Feed My sheep!**' " (John 21:15-17, AT.)

Every minister who has the Spirit of God has been given this commission, just as Jesus charged Peter. Every minister needs to know that the very reason for his calling is to feed the sheep of God--the brethren of Jesus Christ! If any man is a minister for other reasons, his ministry will be vanity and emptiness!

Every minister of Jesus Christ will be judged according to his works. If he is faithfully preaching the Truth of God, he will receive an eternal reward. If he is compromising with the Truth in order to protect his position, his prestige, his salary or his pension, he will have to give an account to Jesus Christ.

Those ministers who truly love Jesus Christ will faithfully continue to preach the Truth of God even at the risk of personal loss and deprivation. They will follow the example of the apostle Paul, who faithfully taught the true Gospel of Jesus Christ because he valued the spiritual welfare of his brethren above his own physical life. Paul endured great persecution and hardship in order to impart to his brethren the Truth of God that leads to eternal life. Here are Paul's heartfelt words to his Corinthian brethren:

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"For we [ministers] which live are always [continually] delivered to death on account of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. Now then death is indeed working in us [ministers] and life in you [brethren]....**For all things are for your sake**, in order that the abounding grace might through the thanksgiving of many cause to exceed [overflow] to the glory of God.

"For which cause we are not fainting. But indeed if our outward man is perishing, yet the inward [man] is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of our tribulation is working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. **For we are not considering the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: because the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal**" (II Cor. 4:11-18, AT).

The apostle Paul was faithful to the charge that he received from Jesus Christ. As a true minister of God, he fed the flock with the pure doctrines of the Word of God. His reward is sure! Paul will inherit eternal life with glory and power in the Kingdom of God, serving the Father and Jesus Christ in eternal love! This is the reward that God offers to every minister who faithfully preaches the pure Truth of His Word, regardless of corporate organization or church affiliation.

Compromising Christians Must Individually Repent!

When top leaders in the organized churches of God turn away from the true doctrines of Jesus Christ and begin to embrace false doctrines, the ministers and members in those churches are under powerful pressure to conform. Many of these ministers and members have succumbed to the pressure, fearing the consequences of going against the tide of doctrinal change. Some are deceived into believing that they will lose salvation if they oppose those in authority. Others are afraid of being viewed as "heretics" by brethren that they have known for years. Many are compromising simply because they have longstanding friendships with other church members that they are unwilling to give up.

If you have been compromising the Truth of God in order to remain in good standing as a minister or a member of an organized church, you are in great spiritual danger! The Word of God clearly shows that a Christian who knowingly condones sin and error is defiling his or her conscience. A defiled conscience will eventually grow calloused and indifferent to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul describes the end result of yielding to the pressure of false doctrines: "Now the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **deceiving spirits, and doctrines of demons**; speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron**" (I Tim. 4:1-2, AT).

Every Christian who has been **knowingly compromising** by yielding to false doctrines is in danger of ending up in this unregenerate spiritual condition. **It**

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is the continued condoning and acceptance of sin and error that leads to loss of salvation. Opposing false doctrines--even when they are promoted by church authorities--will never cause a Christian to lose his or her salvation.

All Christians who have been compromising the Truth by accepting false doctrines need to repent and return to God and to His grace and love. God the Father will cleanse each one who truly repents with humble supplications. Each one must individually turn to God with his or her whole heart. Only then can he or she be restored in love and faith to God the Father and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those Christians who have been compromising are endangering their salvation if they wait on a general movement toward repentance among the churches of God. It is a grave mistake to delay our personal repentance when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and error in our lives!

David, a man after God's heart, was instant and wholehearted in his repentance when the Spirit of God convicted him. When David had sinned greatly against God, this was his prayer of repentance: "Lord, be merciful unto me: **heal my soul; for I have sinned against you**" (Ps. 41:4). Again, when repenting of his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah her husband, he pleaded with God, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness: according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. **Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

"**Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow....**Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. **Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.** Cast me not away from Your presence: and take not Your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:1-11).

Each Christian who has sinned against God by compromising with false doctrines needs to have this attitude of deep spiritual repentance and humility. Each one needs to ask God to cleanse his or her heart from the sin of casting aside the Truth of God and believing lies! Each one needs to ask God to heal his or her mind from compromising with evil and yielding to the forces of apostasy. Each one needs to ask God to heal his or her spirit from the wounds inflicted by Satan's powerful fiery darts of deceit! God will hear and He will answer. God will heal and He will forgive. God will strengthen and He will bless.

Jesus Christ gave this admonition to the church at Laodicea: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire, that you may be rich; and *buy from Me* white

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garments, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, in order that you may see!

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. **Therefore be zealous, and repent!** Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.

"The one who overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His throne. **The one who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**" (Rev. 3:18-22, AT).

May God grant you the ears to hear, the heart to repent, and the courage to stand for the Truth. May God grant you the understanding you need to fulfill your personal Christian duty to defend the faith once delivered to the saints. May God grant you love for your brethren in the churches of God so that you will share this book with them, in the hope that they also may escape the snare of Satan the devil.

God has promised to richly reward all who remain faithful to His Truth in the face of trials and persecution. God's promise of an eternal inheritance to those who are faithful is sure and steadfast. If we keep our minds fixed on the hope that He has set before us, we will be able to endure every fiery trial. Let us remember these words of encouragement from the apostle Paul:

"...God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a **strong consolation**, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon **the hope set before us**: which hope we have as **an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast**, and which enters into that within the veil; **into which the forerunner, even Jesus, has entered for us...**" (Heb. 6:17-20).

May God the Father fill you with His strength, His love, His grace, His Truth, and His faith to keep you in the glorious hope of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Additional Study Aids

In order to help Christians be restored in the faith and the love of God the Father and Jesus Christ, *The Christian Biblical Church of God* will provide, upon request, the following audio cassettes for use as Bible study aids:

- 1) To Stand for the Truth**
- 2) The Love of God and the New Covenant**
- 3) Faith for Salvation**
- 4) What Is the Government of God? (two cassettes)**
- 5) God Is a Personal Being (includes study paper)**
- 6) God Is a Family**
- 7) Could Jesus Have Sinned?**
- 8) The Mystery of Godliness**
- 9) The Table of the Lord vs. the Table of Demons**

Please address requests to:

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About This Book

Lord, What Should I Do? by Fred R. Coulter was written to help Christians who are confused and bewildered by the escalating doctrinal chaos which is threatening to undermine the true faith of the Bible. In America today, Satan is attacking in full fury any religious organization that teaches any Truth from the Word of God. Now that he has nearly completed the subversion of Protestantism, he is focusing all his efforts on Sabbath-keeping Christians and their organizations. His ultimate goal is the annihilation of all Christians--all who are the begotten sons of God the Father and the true brethren of Jesus Christ.

True Christians need to be aware of Satan's devices. They need to wake up and perceive what is now taking place within the churches of God. Satan's subtle deception is being accomplished--not by a direct attack from without, but by a clever, insidious conspiracy at work within the churches' own headquarters. Satan is launching his attack with an avalanche of false doctrines through the top authorities and highest-ranking ministers within the churches of God. These ministers, who purport to speak the Truth of God, have in reality erred from the Truth and have been subverted by Satan into accepting false teachings. They have unwittingly become Satan's agents by promulgating false doctrines.

This book reveals how pseudo-scholars and self-seeking ministers within the centrally organized churches of God are being used by Satan to undermine and destroy the faith of true Christians, ministers as well as members. The original apostles of Jesus Christ were confronted with the same subtle attack by false teachers and so-called apostles. The New Testament is filled with warnings against these "false apostles" and "deceitful workers."

You, your fellow Christians and the church you affiliate with may be experiencing such attacks. This book is designed to answer the question, "*Lord, what should I do?*"

About the Author

Fred R. Coulter attended the University of San Francisco and graduated from San Mateo State College before graduating from Ambassador College, Pasadena, California, with a BA in Theology in 1964. He was ordained a minister of Jesus Christ in 1965 and pastored churches of God in the Pacific Northwest, the Mountain States, the greater Los Angeles area and Monterey, including the central coast area in California. Mr. Coulter completed advanced Biblical and ministerial studies in 1972-75 under the Ambassador College Masters program. Currently he is pastor, teacher, lecturer and writer for the Christian Biblical Church of God in California.



Mr. Coulter has dedicated his life and talents to proclaiming Jesus Christ as personal Savior for all. He has an active and far-reaching audio and video ministry which reaches all of the United States and Canada, as well as England, Denmark, Australia, the Philippines and Malaysia. He has had his own radio program, called "Bible Answers," both live two-way talk and prerecorded. From 1979-83, he was editor and writer for *Bible Answers* magazine. At the present time he is editor and writer for *The Christian Biblical Church of God*. He is author of *A Harmony of the Gospels in Modern English*, *The Christian Passover* and *Lord, What Should I Do?* Fred R. Coulter has undertaken a special ministry devoted to those Christians who have endured persecution and abuse by church leaders and ministers. He has helped many disillusioned Christians to renew their love and faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ.