

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



WHAT ARE THE ENEMY'S PREPARATION TEAM UP TO IN OUR DAY?

by

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**(Spotting the Enemy's workers and present
strategies – "Fruit" to recognize and so
keep us safe from the enemy's people.)**

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What are the “tricks” that the Anti-Christ’s “Prep-Team” are up to today ?

INTRODUCTION

All of us have been surprised at how fast the slide towards the Tribulation Period has occurred. The prophetic indicators that the Tribulation is very close are lining up so quickly we all need to stand back, pause, reflect and open up the prophetic words of the Scripture carefully and prayerfully. The enemy always utilizes confusion and will cause it every opportunity he has. The enemy’s active team in media today is having a field day but remember the “Angelic Conflict” Doctrine brethren.

Satan always puts his best people in the churches for there they can do the most damage to believer’s hope, gospel preaching, confidence in the Lord, and to the reputations of genuine believers. Satan specializes through history in Deception, Distraction, Distortion and finally in Destruction of all that is true, godly and gospel message enhancing.

Nutty preaching about this topic on all internet platforms is extensive and to be expected, for if the enemy can throw enough dust into the air, confusion will rob the worried of any hope and confidence in the Lord’s Plan. The Eternal Plan is on track and even the foolishness of men will praise Him, for all is woven into the Plan. Good people are worried as they look out into the darkening world. There has never been a time where **Psalm 55:22, and 1 Peter 5:7** was more needed by every believer. Our only question as we face accelerating evil must be, “What is God doing here?” To help us get perspective, let’s begin also by seeing what God said the enemy would be up to as we draw closer to the end-game.

We will try to lay this out with clarity and with serious study of the prophetic words that relate to the time we suddenly find ourselves confronting. We all thought we had more time, but it’s now very clear, we do not have even days to waste!

Let’s get this subject laid out systematically in terms of the doctrines of “Systematic Theology” so we see God’s policy as it has been unfolded by the prophets and apostles and see then our own separate part to play. We must each walk with Jesus on the “Narrow Mountain Path” He has called us each to walk. **Matthew 7:13ff**. Truth has never been with the majority, and we must get used to very selected company, walking with Jesus our Lord and only with those who cherish the Lord and seriously study and obey His Holy Word.

Let us begin this study by examining the best example of the Early Church applying biblical prophetic revelation to their situation and saving their lives thereby. We need that same “literal” focus today. The early church at Jerusalem faced a real crisis locally as we do internationally. Their example is instructive – let’s see what they saw, and what they did to save all their lives. We believe a “literal hermeneutic” is required in our

own day, as it was in theirs. Read on and see whether you believe we are correct in this.

HISTORIC EXAMPLE OF GOOD BIBLICAL ANALYSIS BY THE CHURCH

Our example for action is the doctrinal application and subsequent behaviour of the Jerusalem Church in AD 66, led after the murder of James in AD 65 by the Apostle John, with many of the Twelve Disciples still there in the city as church elders. The Jewish Revolt broke out around Passover time in the Spring of AD 66. King Herod Agrippa II tried to calm the situation but was forced from the city of Jerusalem and he rejoined the Romans to the north, and the Galilee and Jerusalem are seized quickly by the Jewish rebel groups, with the Roman garrisons massacred, even when “safe conduct” is guaranteed.

The church stays put in Jerusalem in this period and keeps up its witness in the now “liberated” city, but all is not well at all, for the very religious fanaticism that rejected Jesus as Messiah is now in control within the city and factional warfare and murder is daily commonplace. The church keeps witnessing in the midst of the evil, but they sense the “end-game” for Israel is close.

The rebel groups fought amongst each other, as like all power-focused religious groups they are hopelessly divided. Look at the modern Middle East and you have a glimpse of the evils that occurred in the rebel held areas. Remember the words of Jesus all through our study, for He alone must guide us to interpret the events of our day, as He guided the early churches in this terrible time from AD 66-70. By their “fruit” the evil is seen in the people who many still want to call “patriots” – let’s be biblical not political here and now!

In Matthew 7:13-23 we are bluntly told by the Lord that apparent success, and clear demonstrations of “spiritual” power are not to guide our assessments of any person or group. We are to judge people and groups solely on the basis on the spiritual fruit in their lives.

Matthew 7:13-24. *“13. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

22. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

23. *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

24. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”:*

Note the principles for our survival (as the Early Church did) in the Lord’s words.

1. There are two paths for believers (he is speaking to believers not just unbelievers here), the path of ease, popularity with the world, and deception. While salvation cannot be lost, ministry opportunity and eternal rewards can be. (1 Corinthians 3)
2. The spiritual call is to the “constrained/mountain path” with Jesus in single file, following his footsteps alone, or walking with Him beside us. Close fellowship with the Lord is called for not multiple casual “friendships” with the world. It is “hard”, and it is lonely (“few”).
3. Fruit of the Spirit is alone the guide to being on the right track – if we walk with Jesus, we will develop the fruit of the Holy Spirit as we advance along the tough mountain path He leads us on.
4. Signs of power are a guide to nothing at all! Where the power comes from is the key. Satan is the great counterfeiter (2 Corinthians 11) and he delights in deceiving people into thinking they have great “gifts”, but he doesn’t do the “fruit” of the Spirit!
5. It’s not the fake, trite pseudo-spiritual words that prove we are the Lord’s, it’s our genuine faith-walk with Jesus, it’s our relationship that is eternal.
6. Satan specializes in fakery – we must test the spirits (1 John 4) for as we approach the end days the enemy is increasing his fakery operation in all the churches and false pseudo-spirituality is dangerously on the rise. “Fruit inspection” for genuine Christ-likeness alone gives a safe guide to the genuine.

The Jewish politics of the days after Passover of AD 66 was now, “sudden death playoff”, with only one result biblically – the fruit of evil would be seen openly - the forces of so-called “Jewish liberation” would murder each other and then with their Pharisaic religious extremism dominate and abuse the surviving general population. That is what occurred, and it remained the case until the very end in July-August AD 70 when the city and temple fell and were destroyed, with most dead and any survivors enslaved, exactly as Daniel had prophesied would be the case.

From Messiah being “cut off” (the Cross in AD 32) there was only one outcome for Jerusalem – destruction – and it would be on a biblical time-table, for God is a God of precision. The Exodus timeframe of 38 years would apply. Daniel had given God’s verdict 550 years before. (Study slowly and carefully the “Last Words Commentary” on the entire book of Daniel for it explains where we are in history also. www.ebcwa.com)

Daniel 9:26-27. *“26. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

27. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Note what I call the “survival principles” from this section of prophetic scripture.

1. From the rebuilding of the gates and walls of Jerusalem in 445 BC to the Cross was “69 prophetic weeks” (Daniel 9:24-25), and they knew the prophetic clock for Israel must have stopped, for more than seven years had passed since the Ascension in AD 32.
2. If the “clock” had stopped and the Lord’s promised Return was “delayed”, then the terrible consequences of the nation’s rejection of Messiah in AD 32 would work out literally and fully, just as the details of the First Advent had been literally and fully fulfilled.
3. The logical time-frame of both grace and judgment for Israel was always the volition testing/sifting Exodus period of 38 years of wilderness wandering.
4. As the Church at Jerusalem counted down, and especially after James murder at prayer in the temple courtyard in AD 65, and after the reception of the Letter to the Hebrews the year before, the Church knew they had to leave the city.
5. They had delayed leaving the city. **Hebrews 13:12-14.** I especially understand this now, having to walk away from my own house within two months of writing these words with great financial loss. It was a hard thing for John and the others to leave the city and their homes and walk away. I now fully understand that.
6. The evil fruit of the Jewish Revolt leadership, and the Roman Army’s arrival gave them the weeks to prepare and then move when the day of opportunity arrived.

There was no doubt about how this revolt would end for thorough biblical scholars who took God’s Word seriously and literally, as the disciples left in the city did. Today we are all to be equally serious students of the Word, and having found the prophetic truth, we are challenged to believe it and apply it and obey its injunctions in Holy Spirit filled precision and power. We are not to be like the dodgy so called “fathers”, Origen and Clement, and spiritualize prophetic words away. Biblical literalism saved the Jerusalem church in AD 66 and we need the same precision today, not the waffling nonsense of the spiritualizers.

2 Timothy 1:7. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

Also today in the 21st century we have an additional theological challenge. We must not be guided by “liberation theology”, or by any thought of the Jewish rebels as “patriots”, or “freedom fighters”. Biblical analysis is needed as we are analyzing the motives, beliefs and behaviours of the Jewish rebels. The Cross, Resurrection, Pentecost and

the Ascension had all occurred in AD 32. The Biblical time period for grace before judgment is the Exodus Time-Frame = 38 years. The rebels were all people who rejected the First Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had ignored or rejected the “Prince of Peace” and would demonstrate by the fruit in their life that they wanted the satanic alternative to Jesus – and sadly they would get it with interest from the Romans and their own chosen leadership!

Just as the Disciples/Apostles left in the city did, we must go back to Daniel for guidance as to the nature and end of the “Age of the Gentiles”, and then see what to expect ourselves. What did the Bible say about the great Empires of the “Age of the Gentiles”? From Daniel it was very clear to the Apostles in the city of Jerusalem that the Roman Empire will win! How did the church, in the now rebel held city of Jerusalem, know this? They can read Daniel, and they do! You must today also believe, or you will not understand what we face today.

Daniel 2:40-43. *“40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.*

41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

43. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.”

Believer, Pause, Reflect - The Millennial Kingdom will be established ending the latter days of the Revived Roman Empire under its last dictator (**Verses 44ff**). Its final form will be a multi-state “empire”, but it will be triumphant until the very end, when Jesus destroys it all. Do not be misled by the alarmist preachers who speak of the “rise of Islam and the death of the West”, for we have God’s Word on it from Daniel. The West will not be destroyed by anyone except the Lord! It will persist as the great godless power centre to the very end and be destroyed by the Lord at His Second Coming. From Daniel’s sure prophetic words the Jerusalem Church knew the Romans would win and crush in blood the rebellion, and so they left their Messiah-rejecting brethren in the city to the judgment! We need the same ruthless but accurate logic today!

Like the demon possessed men of ISIS today the Jewish rebels of AD 66-70 misinterpreted this last passage and **Daniel 2:44-45** as “we will defeat Rome” – but history will prove them liars, as again in the AD 130s with the Second Jewish Revolt. By their “fruit” and by their results they are known as liars, and pause, think, reflect – who is the “father of liars”? We are too influenced by the French and American Revolution writers, and we see rebels as “patriots”, “fighting for freedom”, but biblically we must look at each situation separate from all others and do a “fruit inspection” of the individuals and keep our analysis and conclusions within the biblical framework of

history. Those evil men who speak most of “freedom” are always proved the biggest tyrants when they get power. “By their fruit they are known”.

John 8:12, 31-32, 36, 41-45, 56-58.

“12. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

31. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

32. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

41. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

56. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

57. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58. Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

Note the survival principles here.

1. Closeness in the walk with Jesus is alone protective – for He is the “Way, the Truth and the Light and Life”.
2. The genuine believer is always abused and insulted by the “fakes”. They are to be ignored once their “fruit” is identified. The Lord’s opinion alone is to be heeded for He alone is our judge, and He is the rewarder of our Holy Spirit led actions.
3. It is our “family likeness” that shows our true relationship. We are to be like Jesus, and the enemy will be seen to be “like Satan” in his pride and arrogance.
4. The Lord and His Word alone!

Do that “Fruit Inspection” again of the rebels (and today’s satanic team), for this “survival principle” of truth telling by the Lord, and lying by the enemy, is a critical aspect of today’s media world in the challenges we presently face. The enemy is seriously “lying” today and has apparent control of most major media outlets and saying things that are so outrageous yet are not silenced by the politicians.

What did the church at Jerusalem do as they faced the zealot lies and threats? They were trapped in the city, for the zealots would let people into the city, but controlled all exit from the city as the Roman army to the north started to try to crush the rebellion. This first Roman counterpunch was however fatally too small an army to do the job. The rebels in control of the city of Jerusalem guarded the gates, for they wanted no “spies” escaping, and wanted every young man present as a “fighter” for them.

Note the significant timeframe the Jerusalem Church could immediately see.

1. The rebellion breaks out in Spring of AD 66 – Passover time.
2. The majority of the nation had rejected the true Passover Lamb, and sadly they would accept the satanic zealot alternatives.
3. The behaviours of the zealots and rebel groups were characterized by very evil “fruit” indeed. More of them died fighting each other than died fighting the Romans.
4. The Feast of Trumpets and Tabernacles saw a great influx into the city again and the rebels kept those people there as extra fighters.
5. So reflect, for Both the Feasts that spoke of the First and Second Advents had been used by the rebels in falsehood – their “Lies” proved their parentage – this was a rebellion of satanic proportions, not a patriotic war.
6. Jesus had warned in the Olivet Discourse that when the church saw “eagles” on the hills around the city that is where the bodies would lie, and using Daniel’s language made it clear that the city would be destroyed. **Matthew 24:2, 28, Mark 13:2, Luke 21:5-6, 20-24**. The Romans arrived outside Jerusalem with their Eagle standards by October AD 66 but had to withdraw after a few weeks as there were not enough troops (only about 2 Legions) and their supply lines were being attacked. The church had a few weeks to pack and prepare and they did.
7. The Romans withdrew and were defeated by the rebels in a massive ambush at Beth Horon later that October. The Gates of Jerusalem were open and in effect unguarded for a few days while the battles were being fought, and led by John, and applying prophetic teaching of Daniel and the Lord, the entire church left the city, leaving all their houses behind, and fled across the Jordan to Pella and from there dispersed to their wide world ministries. John heading to Ephesus with Mary.

Be very clear at this start point of our study believer. The early church at Jerusalem were “literalists”, and they were saved by their belief in and application of relevant prophetic revelation, especially from Daniel. That is our challenge today. We are not to take texts out of their context, or we will, as Dr David L Cooper said many years ago, find “pretexts” for all sorts of nonsense. The early church are our mentors!

Satan’s devices have always remained open and consistent – **2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:13-15**, and “crazy” wide eyed prophetic nonsense is a major tool he uses to stop intelligent people thinking as deeply as they need to in our own day. The early church at Jerusalem needed to get the truth of what was occurring right, or they would have all died in the final siege under Vespasian with four legions, which was successful, destroying the City and Temple, leaving only the “Wailing Wall” standing.

The “Wailing Wall” remains God’s commentary on Pharisaic Mishnaic Judaism. We need to get things right today, for the enemy’s malice towards believers is growing daily. Serious study is required of Daniel and Revelation especially but let us introduce the subject here and now.

THE GEO-POLITICAL-RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF TODAY

So now, let's see some of the other prophetic words of Daniel relating to the Roman Empire and its replacement – the final form of the Roman Empire that we are presently facing. The Bible was always clear that the Roman Empire wouldn't disappear, just "morph" into a new and even more terrible "Beast" and God's Word is clear the Western World "Empire" of manipulation and violent control will be dominant right to the very end.

Western Evil Power will be totally destroyed **only** by the Lord's Second Advent, but not before, and its final leader will be the alternative to the "Prince of Peace" – its final leader will be the "Anti-Christ" and he will unite the Western World and dominate and abuse much of the rest of the world by sheer evil and violent power-politics. The vision of Daniel 2 sets the scene for the "Age of the Gentiles", dominated by the power-worshipping and abusive gentile empires that will only end with the Lord's personal return, so we are clear **the Age of the Gentiles is not over yet!** It will end with the Lord's Second Advent and His Kingdom being established on the earth.

Let's pick up the subsequent visions of Daniel, for this is our present context for living and witness today. This book is a very brief overview for our specific purpose of seeing what Anti-Christ's "prep-team" are up to today, and so follow this study up by downloading and reading Daniel and Revelation from the "Last Words Commentaries" files on our website. www.ebcwa.com

Daniel 7:7-8, 18-23, *"7. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.*

8. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

18. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

19. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

20. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

21. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

22. Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

23. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces."

Note the "survival principles" that the Jerusalem Church identified and acted upon.

1. The fourth "Beast" is the worst and the final gentile power "empire", and while it has morphed today into the two legged/footed modern "Beast" straddling the Atlantic Ocean it remains the same violent and abusive force the Roman Empire always was.
2. At times the "beast" has been modified by a maximum number of believers within the power structure, but the blessing has been limited, and the time short. As western believers we talk up our own history, but Europe is the future centre of the Anti-Christ's kingdom, not the Middle East, Africa, Pacifica, or Asia.
3. The believers in Jerusalem knew the Roman Empire would win – there was no doubt at all. There is no doubt at all today that the present geo-political "Western Empire" will become more and more evil and a new leader will emerge and unite by violence the corrupt "mixed bag" of clay and steel nations of the EC/USA.
4. The early churches focused upon their ministry, not their homes and businesses and bank accounts. So must we! Be ready believer to "walk away" and go anywhere to serve the Lord calls you to go in these last days before the Anti-Christ emerges. Ministry only, not earthly "real estate", for the only "real" estate we have is in heaven.
5. His evil team are working to prepare for him, as we will see prophetically described in the Word below, but we must be busy also – teaching the truth, whether we are heard in our day or not. **Ezekiel 3:10-11, 20-27, 33:1ff.**

Note that the "Beast" that is Western power is focused upon here, but also its last ruler emerges as a major object of concentration for Daniel. This last great ruler, the "Anti-Christ" is introduced here. Followed by the Second Advent. **Verses 7-14.** The Anti-Christ figure is further described in **Daniel 7:24-28**. Satan' first "dry-run" at the "world-ruler" evil leader is the Greek king of Syria, Antiochus Epiphanes, and his rise and fall is described in **Daniel 8:9-22**, and the final Anti-Christ glimpsed again in **Daniel 8:23-27**.

This is very serious stuff and requires real concentration, and it is truly awful! The things Daniel sees are so awful he collapses with mental fatigue and depression. As we reflect upon our own darkening days anyone who is smiling and getting excited is out of step with biblical revelation – this time-frame we are presently approaching rapidly is awful and we must be sober, prayerful and focused on what the Lord requires of us.

Beware of those who are joking or laughing about what is unfolding before us today. Just as in the days John led the church from Jerusalem, the church members were sober and sad as they walked away from all they had known and loved. They knew the judgment that was coming, and remember history believer, for over 2 million will die or be enslaved in the years AD 66-70! The Jerusalem church grieved greatly as they left the city, their homes, unsaved friends and family behind.

They couldn't sell up because that would have flagged to the zealot authorities they were leaving permanently – they had to pretend they were simply “visiting relatives” and slip away when the gates were unguarded. I understand their grief as I pack my house to leave it with great personal financial loss for the rest of my life, but I am comforted by the knowledge that at death we leave all our “stuff” behind anyway, and so my focus is upon the next phase of my life ministry, so was the Apostle John's and the others.

Grief should also be our emotion as we face the present reality, just as it was for the Jerusalem Church. Any excitement and emotional “fizz” at the prophetic truth of the judgment that is about to break upon the world is misplaced and a sign you are probably not getting the facts here. We face a future of even greater carnage coming during the time of the Anti-Christ's rule – well over 2/3rd of the world's population is going to be wiped out by events! This evil man, the “antichrist”, the alternative to the genuine Messiah-King is discussed again in **Daniel 11:36ff**. True Messiah's return and Israel's repentance and genuine spiritual revival is then described in **Daniel 12, Zechariah 10-14** and the book of **Revelation**. Follow up this short book by studying each of these books! Its only God's Word that has the Plan that will be followed!

Why is so much space in Daniel and then Revelation given to this “Anti-Christ” character? It's clearly vital for believers to understand this, for the Jerusalem Church as they approached the “last days of Jerusalem”, but especially for us as we approach the last days of the great rebellion of all history against God. Prophecy has only really been studied in Church History since the later years of the nineteenth century, and that makes good sense, as its only in the early 20th century that things start to unfold, with the first truly World Wars, the Balfour Declaration, the re-establishment of Israel and its survival amongst overwhelming attempts to extinguish it. All the “signs” of the end-times that Jesus gave us in the Olivet Discourse are with us today in every sphere. The Lord is truly “at the door”, and all the required pieces of the last puzzle are on the table.

Stay biblical here believers. Don't run off and become either “Doomsday Preppers” or “Zionists”, nor proclaim Israel as a presently godly nation, for it is not, and its regathering to become the strong and militarily powerful entity we see today, while prophesied in Ezekiel 37-39, portends judgment for them and the world, not immediate blessing. Don't get misty eyed about the present nation Israel, for it's the same atheistic, politically and religiously divided, violent and Messiah-rejecting group that was extinguished by Rome in AD 70. Remember my earlier point, the “Wailing Wall” is God's image of his attitude to Messiah-rejecting religious Judaism. **Good news** – it will change in the darkest days of mankind, **Zechariah 10-14**, but it's not changed yet!

Let us pause now and get a systematic plan to examine our subject and let us not be distracted by the enemy into side-tracks here.

Hold Our Present Question Clearly Before you.

“What is the Anti-Christ's Prep-Team up to today?”

1. Doctrinal Context
 Angelic Conflict
 Salvation
 Religion
 Satan's Strategy
2. Our Lord Jesus Christ's Teaching
 Olivet Discourse
 Characteristics of the "Latter Days/End Times"
3. Fruit Inspecting Getting the Analysis Criteria Biblically Right facing the
 Deceptions we presently confront in Media and the Internet itself.
 Fruit of the Spirit
 Fruit of Evil

Note - We will not be identifying specific people and groups and warning against them. That is not our objective here.

We want to teach you to "think biblically" and be guided by the Holy Spirit and stay under the covering of your godly biblical-teaching pastor.

Ephesians 5:14-18. *"14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.
 15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
 16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
 17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.
 18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
 19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
 20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."*

God's purpose is that we remain in local churches, as the Jerusalem saints did, right to the end. We are to be biblically saturated through verse-by-verse teaching, being Holy Spirit filled, and godly pastor-teacher led, not acting like "survivalists" and terrorists, or political activists unless led specifically to be active there. Holy Spirit led believer – doing exactly what the Lord requires of us. My personal role is to preach and teach, my wife has been led to be a Christian witness and influence as an executive political worker within government and it's a harder role than mine, but it is clearly her present call.

We are here for "such a time as this" to proclaim the saving and only Gospel message right until we are pulled out of this world by death or the Rapture. No petty politics or "nutty squirrel theology" is to muddy the waters, but biblical teaching is to clarify our thinking.

What Do We Clearly See The Unbeliever Power-Elite Are To Today?

1. Doctrinal Context

Let us get some of the biblical doctrines clearly in our minds and apply them into the world we find being changed before our eyes. Firstly, let us remind ourselves of the spiritual context of the Creation, Fall and the story of Redemption – namely the Angelic Conflict. Those set out below are from the Bible Topic Book, on the website.

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT

1. There is an “angelic conflict” and it is intimately related to our presence in this world, and it builds in intensity towards the end, as Satan knows his days are numbered.

2. ETERNITY PAST

[a] Initially God created angels. At creation we are told that there was unity as all the angels sang in unison.

[b] Satan, originally known as Lucifer with the title ‘Son of the Morning’, was the head of the angels. Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28:12-15

[c] It is noted that the Lord Jesus Christ is now called Son of the Morning in 2 Peter 1 showing that the Lord replaced Satan as a result of His victory at the Cross.

3. FALL OF SATAN

[a] Satan became proud and attempted a coup d’etat against God in Isaiah 14:12-17

[b] When Satan fell he took one third of the angels with him. Revelation 12:9.

[c] The angels, who exist forever, therefore fall into two permanent groups:

(i) Elect Angels who remained faithful to God (1 Timothy 5:21)

(ii) Fallen angels who chose to follow Satan fall into two categories:

(1) Imprisoned ones who were made inoperative at the time of the Flood (Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4)

(2) Demons who are currently operative (1 Corinthians 10:20,21, Mark 5:1-20)

[d] There is therefore an incessant spiritual warfare between elect and fallen angels, which affects the human race. (Ephesians, 6:12, Revelation 12)

4. SENTENCE ON THE FALLEN ANGELS

[a] In eternity past Satan and the fallen angels were judged and sentenced to the Lake of Fire - Matthew 24:51

[b] It would appear that Satan appealed against his sentence and said, "how can a God of Love sentence any of his creatures to the lake of fire?"

[c] The answer is in the Justice, and all other aspects of the holy Character of God who is HOLY as well as LOVE. His holiness can only judge sin and rebellion, for without judgment of rebellion and evil all that is good is eventually defiled and lost.

[d] The “Lake of Fire” therefore was not created for man. Individual men and women end up in the lake of fire due to their own negative attitude towards God – in arrogance they join Satan in his original sin and so join him forever in his eternal state.

5. MAN’S ROLE IN THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

[a] This sentence upon Satan, which was given before man existed, has not yet been executed and will not be so until the end of the Millennium in Revelation 20:10.

[b] There must be a long lapse of time before the sentence is executed with this period being taken up with the whole of human history. Therefore, the purpose of the existence of the human race, and its decision-making in relation to God, can only be explained as a testimony to the angels.

[c] Through the creation of man, as a “little lower than the angels”, God provides a clear legal witness to Satan and his angels of their sin. If an inferior creature like men and women can repent and obey their Creator-Saviour, then so should have the superior angels. The whole of human history is to prove certain points to the angels. Things can happen in your life as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and some of these can only be explained as a testimony to the angels.

6. FALL OF MAN AND VICTORY OF THE GOD MAN

[a] Man starts off lower than the angels. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus Christ made Himself a little lower than the angels to become our Saviour.

[b] Although Adam failed to be victorious the Lord Jesus Christ replaces Adam in history and won the battle in His humanity. 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive.

[c] A new form of creature “in Christ Jesus” come into existence, and we will judge the angels. 1 Corinthians 6:1-3

7. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ANGELS AND MAN

[a] Angels and mankind have a number of parallels, with human free will being tested in exactly the same way as angelic free will.

[b] Angels began in innocence and full obedience to God (Job 38:7 Ezekiel 28:14-15)

Man began in innocence (Genesis 2:25)

Angels sinned - rebellion of Satan (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Man sinned - rebellion of Adam (Genesis 3:1-7)

Angels are divided into two categories - elect or fallen.

Mankind is divided into two categories - believers and unbelievers. (John 3:36)

8. ADAM AND FREEWILL

[a] God created Adam and Eve, to show Satan that mankind, created lower than angels (Hebrews 2:6-7), could and some would choose to obey God. Mankind therefore, by a choice of freewill, would decide whether to obey God and be blessed, or to disobey God and be judged (the same choice that Satan had).

[b] A test was instituted for man's freewill - obedience to God or disobedience. (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam - and therefore all mankind - sinned and thereby rebelled against God. All of mankind, therefore, is now as children of Adam and Eve born in the same condition of sinful rebellion as Satan.

[c] However, God instituted another test of freewill for mankind - will they choose to return to God through Jesus Christ, or will they choose to continue in sin and rebellion (John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9).

[d] Anyone who chooses to return to God will be saved; anyone who chooses to remain in rebellion to God will be judged in the lake of fire, the same fate as Satan (Matthew 25:41)

[e] Therefore, by the work of Christ on the cross, and man's freewill faith in Christ, God has vindicated His love to save and His justice to judge.

9. RESOLUTION OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

Stage 1 - Salvation - by faith, man is saved and made positionally superior to angels (Hebrews 2:6-7)

Stage 2 - Christian Walk - by faith, the believer overcomes Satan (Ephesians 6:10-17)

Stage 3 - Eternity -in Christ, the believer will judge Satan and his fallen angels (Hebrews 2:8, 1 Corinthians 6:3)

10. THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Angels eagerly watch the human race. (1 Corinthians 4:9, Ephesians 3:10, 1 Timothy 5:21, 1 Peter 1:12). Elect angels rejoice every time someone is saved (Luke 15:10)

11. THREE BASIC QUESTIONS

The angelic conflict answers three basic questions:-

[a] Why man? Inside man is a soul with mentality and freewill which when linked together resolves the angelic conflict, (Colossians 2:14-15, Hebrews 2). The cross is the real victory in the angelic conflict.

[b] Why sin? Sin resolves stage 1 of the Plan of God (see paragraph 9). At the cross sin was judged and the barrier between man and God was removed so that each person's relationship with God depends on his/her free will. Every time a person accepts Christ, elect angels rejoice. In the Garden man was innocent and all he had to do was stay away from one tree. Now man is guilty, and she/he has to come to a tree (the cross). (Genesis 2:17, 1 Peter 2:24).

[c] Why suffering? Suffering resolves the issue in Stage 2. Suffering involves the promise principle. (1 Peter 1:7-8, Romans 5:2-4, 8:26-39). Suffering is designed for blessing and is a further blow to Satan. It is to demonstrate the love of God in a way that cannot be done in eternity as in eternity there is no more sorrow, pain or death. (Revelation 21:4)

12. STAGES IN THE CONFLICT [SEE SATANIC ATTACK ON THE PLAN OF GOD]

[a] From the fall of man to the ascension of Christ the line of Christ and Jesus Christ himself were the target of attack. Once the ascension was a fact in history Satan was unable to attack the line of the Saviour any further.

[b] The resurrection, ascension and session of the Lord Jesus Christ caused intensification in the angelic conflict.

[c] Once Christ is glorified at the right hand of the Father the angelic conflict becomes intensified in the Church age. Satan knows his doom is sealed since then!

[d] Every Church Age believer is now a target and because of this every believer has had special provisions made for him:

- (i) Indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17)
- (ii) Indwelling of Jesus Christ (John 14:23)
- (iii) Completed canon of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:10)

13. PROGRESSION TO THE LAKE OF FIRE

This explains the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ from the time he sat down at the right hand of the Father until the Last Judgement. Psalm 110:1 says, "The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [God the Son], Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

[a] The first stage – Insurgency warfare – Pentecost - Rapture

During this time He calls out the personnel who will replace the angelic council members who have been condemned 1 Corinthians 4:8, 6:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 3:21

The angelic council comprises God and all the angels as seen in 1 Kings 22:19-23 and 2 Chronicles 18:18-23

[b] The second stage – Rapture to Second Advent - Confrontation

During this time the new members of the angelic council are evaluated in relation to their divine and human good, rewarded [1 Corinthians 3:11-15], they lose their old sin nature and have a resurrection body. The rebellious members, Satan and his followers are cast out of heaven Revelation 12:4

[c] The third stage – Second Advent – Victory Stage

Christ casts Satan into hell for a thousand years, and the demons are in Hell also, and so God rightfully asserts His authority.

[d] The fourth stage – The Last Judgement. The Lake of Fire was created for Satan and his angels Matthew 25:41

Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire with the demons and the unbelievers. Unbelievers join them in the Lake of Fire because they have not accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The old creation is destroyed and a new heavens and a new earth provided by

God. At that point all knees shall bow and the promise of making His enemies His footstool will have been fulfilled.

14. THE BELIEVERS AND RESULT OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

The result of the angelic conflict:

Stage 1 - Salvation - saved mankind is positionally superior to angels;

Stage 2 - Christian Walk - through suffering the believer develops his faith towards Christ to such an extent that he thereby shows the fallen angels the certainty of their doom;

Stage 3 - Heaven - In eternity the believer in his resurrection body will be physically superior to angels.

15. CONCLUSION

Through the fall of man Satan obtained control of the world though not necessarily control of mankind.

What makes it possible for each woman and man to live in the Devil's world and not be under his control? - Free will and the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

By using The Word of God, in Holy Spirit filled power, you can make decisions that are completely against Satan and his "worldliness" concepts.

Satan is the ruler of this world. (2 Corinthians 4:4, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2)

However we have the Bible - the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) We should know it and use it.

Pause and Reflect now believer.

The "Angelic Conflict" is moving steadily towards its next phase in our day, just as it was another "transition time" for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem in October of AD 66.

They had to be ready to walk away from all they had known and loved and so do we today. The only question that is relevant at an 'age-turning' time is, "Lord where to now to play our part in your plan?"

As the days darken and evil men "wax worse and worse", they are deceiving and being deceived (more below in Section 2), but our response is to be more prayerful focus forward on the tasks the Lord desires us to perform. Let's remember the enemy's strategies and be aware of the games he and his team is playing today.

COUNTERFEITS OF SATAN – His Strategy to Deceive the Unthinking

1. False Doctrine of Demons (1 Timothy 4:1)
2. Communion Table (1 Corinthians 10:20-21)
3. Ministers (2 Corinthians 11:12-15)
4. Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)
5. Spirituality (Galatians 3:2-3)

6. Righteousness (Matthew 19:16-28)
7. Power (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10)
8. Gods (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)
9. Religions (Matthew 23)

The big push of the enemy theologically today is false religion, false doctrine, wrongful priorities, and fake spirituality. Some will go as far as to give honour to and even worship the old pagan gods (demons behind them). In Scripture we are very specifically warned against even naming the old pagan gods, for behind every one are demonic forces which are encouraged by all forms of paganism.

Do a short study by simply reading, **Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Joshua 23:7-11, 1 Corinthians 10:16-22**. Now think about the massive increase in pagan ceremonies coming back into Western Nations, honouring the old pagan gods and goddesses – in effect honouring Satan and his crew. Note also the association of the paganism let loose by such things with sexual immorality and drug taking! Read now **Revelation 21:8**. The KJV translated the Greek word “pharmakeia” as “witchcraft” but it is drug-taking! God hates it – it is a satanic policy, always part of paganism, and a doorway to further evils.

Note the people and the groups that are pushing these satanic agendas – spot their origin by the fruit of their work and words! Note the churches that support and trumpet “UN Agenda 2030” but have yet made no mention of the 2000th Anniversary of the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and Day of Pentecost in 2032! Know the enemy’s policy and then spot the political, business and religious leaders who stand for the enemy’s policies, often without even being aware of it.

Deception is Satan’s big push – it always has been, but its increasing today. Only systematic bible teaching enables people to discern what is true and what is false – be very wary of churches that do not teach the Word at times like these we have entered. Remember Jesus words to Peter, shepherding the flock and feeding the “old sheep” and the “young lambs” is critical for their survival. **John 21:15-17**.

ANGELS – SATAN'S STRATEGY

1. Believers are warned against him and his tactics. (Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8)
2. We must be ready for his tricks and alert to dangers. (2 Corinthians 2:11)
3. Satan is a deceiver and a counterfeiter. He uses deception - not obviously wrong or sinful - but very subtle changes to the truth (Genesis 3:1). Remember, a counterfeit looks like the original and only “expert” eyes can tell the fake – that is to be the pastor-teacher and his job is to proclaim truth to the flock so that they are growing in discernment.

4. Satan is described as an "angel of light" - often seeming attractive and "good". (2 Corinthians 11:14). The worst evils are often not the ugly but the beautiful ones.

5. His tactics

a) Towards unbelievers.

i) to blind them regarding the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, 2 Thessalonians 2:9)

b) Towards believers.

i) Satan seeks to hinder our growth and witness. (1 Peter 5:8)

ii) Satan will mislead into false doctrine and legalism. (1 Timothy 5:14-15)

iii) He persuades believers to ignore the will of God through disobedience (Genesis 2:17, James 4:7-8)

iv) Satan often attacks our assurance of salvation so that we doubt God.

v) Worry (1 Peter 5, 7-9)

vi) Fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15)

vii) He accuses believers of sin both to God and to the believer (using guilt). (Revelation 12:9-10, Job 1:6-11)

viii) He takes our focus off Christ by getting eyes on self (1 Corinthians 1:10-11), on people (1 Corinthians 1:12), on things (Hebrews 13:5-6)

ix) When we don't allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives, we open ourselves up to Satanic attack. (1 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Timothy 5:14-15)

x) The Lord will allow Satan to attack a believer as discipline for unconfessed sin. (1 Timothy 1:20 cf 2 Corinthians 12:7)

xi) Satan cannot indwell or possess a believer, only beguile them. (Galatians 3:1)

c) Towards the world in general.

i) The World - Satan tries to deceive the nations. (Revelation 20:7-10)

ANGELS – SATAN'S WORK

SATAN'S SPHERE OF OPERATIONS AMONG MANKIND (Psalm 109:6-13).

The items listed here in this doctrine are only possible with permission for believers lives, as we are the Lord's and any attack permitted on us is for our benefit! Romans 8:26-39 always applies. Even for Unbelievers God's permission appears to be required for any of the things listed in this doctrinal study. God is just and fair – but the unbeliever actively places themselves under Satan's power and "care" and he hates humanity and so takes any opportunity to hurt and kill his own.

1. a) Satan blinds mankind to the truth of the Word of God by means of religion. (v.7)

b) He has the power to shorten life. (v 8a)

c) He can remove persons from a place of authority (v 8b)

d) Satan can kill (v 9)

e) He can persecute children (v 10)

f) He can remove wealth (v 11)

g) Satan can turn people against each other (v. 12)

h) He can cut off man's posterity to the second generation (v. 13) – remember for believers all these things are restricted by the Father, but for unbelievers these are all very real possibilities and why unbelievers are often so superstitious as they fear these realities and then enter into false religion to try to protect themselves – only to deepen Satan's control over them by their increased fear and worry.

2. SATAN AS A KILLER

- a) He has the power of death over unbelievers – but only by God's permission – even with unbelievers – as we see with Job's special case (Hebrews 2:14, 15).
- b) Killed Job's children (Job 1:12, 18,19)
- c) Motivated Cain to murder Abel (John 8:44, cf. 1 John 3:12)
- d) Often administers the sin unto death (1 Corinthians 5:5)

3. SATAN AS A SOURCE OF DISEASE

- a) Was responsible for Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7)
- b) Produced illness in Job (Job 2:6-8)
- c) Uses his demons to inflict diseases (Matthew 12:22, Luke 13:16, Acts 10:38)
- d) Causes certain types of deafness, dumbness, paralysis and crippling effect by means of demon possession (Matthew 4:24, 12:22, Mark 9:17, 18)
- e) When demon possession causes the affliction, the removal of the demon or demons produces an instant cure (Matthew 10:1, Mark 1:32-34, 6:13, Acts 8:7, 19:12)

4. SATAN AS AN INSTRUMENT OF DISCIPLINE

- a) Desired to discipline Peter (Luke 22:31, 32)
- b) Was authorised to discipline the Corinthian adulterer (1 Corinthians 5:5)
- c) Was called upon by the Apostle Paul to administer extreme discipline to Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:19,20)
- d) May become involved in the discipline of ministers and deacons (1 Timothy 3:6, 7)
- e) Attacks through a believer's lack of forgiveness and orientation to grace (2 Corinthians 2:10, 11)

5. SATAN AS A HEALER

- a) Healing was a spiritual gift before the completion of the Canon of Scripture (Acts 19:11, 12, cf Philippians 2:27, 2 Timothy 4:20)
- b) God still heals today (Philippians 2:27) and we are encouraged to pray for healing.
- c) Since Satan possesses some power of disease, he often counterfeits healing by the removal of demons (Matthew 12:24, 24:24, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 16:14).

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF DEMON POSSESSION

- a) Loss of individuality: the demon-possessed person no longer has control of faculties of the soul (Mark 5:1-13, Luke 8:27, 9:39, 40)
- b) Abnormal behaviour:
 - i) Convulsions (Mark 1:26, 9:20, Luke 4:35)
 - ii) Violence (Matthew 8:28)
 - iii) Abnormal strength (Mark 5:4, Luke 8:29, Acts 19:16)
 - iv) Raving (Mark 5:5)

- v) Foaming at the mouth (Mark 9:20)
- vi) Nakedness (Luke 8:27)
- c) Loss of health:
 - i) Dumbness (Mark 9:17, Luke 11:14)
 - ii) Deafness and dumbness (Mark 9:25)
 - iii) Blindness and dumbness (Matthew 12:22)
 - iv) Epilepsy (Mark 1:26, 9:20, Luke 4:35)
 - v) Mental illness (Mark 5:15)

7. DEMON POSSESSION EXPLAINS:

- a) So called divine healing – where the “healer” has arrogance/pride and other bad fruit.
- b) Alleged speaking in tongues – Voodoo and other demonic activities
- c) Faked contact with the dead (1 Samuel 28)
- d) Success of self styled exorcists – who simply may be swapping demons around
- e) Rise of certain world leaders (2 Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 16:13, 14)
- f) Cause of some wars (Revelation 20:8)
- g) Apparent Reincarnation “memories” that are the demon’s memory of the past
- h) Fortune telling (Acts 16:16)

THE ANTICHRIST

1. SCRIPTURE - Daniel 7:8,21-26; 8:23-25; 9:26,27; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 13:1-18; 17:16,17; 19:19,20.

2. BIOGRAPHY

The Antichrist is the world ruler who will emerge as a violently anti-God despot, who will emerge after the removal of God's church. He comes from the gentile nations (the sea) in the last times. His power base will be a ten-nation empire closely related to the old Roman Empire known as the Revived Roman Empire. The Antichrist is very clever and infiltrates by means of a peace campaign. He is, however, very hungry for power and once he wrests power from his subjects, he destroys the apostate religious system which has been working closely with him until then. He makes a covenant with Israel, allowing them to sacrifice in the temple, but eventually sets himself up to be worshipped as God in the temple. His reign of almost seven years duration becomes increasingly and openly anti-God, involving signs and wonders. He has a close relationship with the false prophet, who is the leader of Israel at that time. At the end of his empire he moves on Jerusalem, which is being held by new believers. Jesus Christ returns at the second advent to deliver those in Jerusalem and capture the Antichrist and false prophet, throwing them into the lake of fire.

3. EVALUATION

- a) The Antichrist arises out of the Gentile nations with the final empire of ten nations (Revelation 13:1).
- b) The seven heads are seven mountains which speaks of Rome (Revelation 17:9).

- c) There are seven kings: five are fallen, one is, and one is to come (Revelation 17:10). These are empires - the five that are fallen are Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, Persia and Greece. The one in existence in 96 AD (when John wrote Revelation) was Rome, and the one to come is the Revived Roman Empire.
- d) The ten horns are ten future kingdoms which receive power for a short time. (Revelation 17:12).
- e) He rules empires (Revelation 13:2; cf. Daniel 7:4-6).
- f) His power is from Satan (Revelation 13:2; cf. Revelation 20:2).
- g) Satan gives Antichrist the world empire (Revelation 13:2).
- h) Satanic worship is a key part of Antichrist's regime (Revelation 13:4,8).
- i) He is a great orator. He is anti-God and has power for 3 1/2 years (Revelation 13:5).
- j) His empire becomes a world empire (Revelation 13:7).
- k) The dictator of Palestine who is demon possessed ("the false prophet") promotes him (Revelation 13:11).
- l) Great wonders and miracles are a feature of this empire (Revelation 13:13).
- m) A statue of the Antichrist is constructed. It has the ability to speak. Worship of it is compulsory on the pain of death (Revelation 13:14,15).
- n) The Antichrist controls the world economy by marking members of the human race on the forehead or on the right hand (Revelation 13:16,17; cf. Revelation 14:9-11).
- o) His number is 666, a number which represents "perfect man" or "perfect sin" (Revelation 13:18).
- p) He will not be revealed until the restrainer is removed (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7)
- q) The Antichrist's rule features power, signs and lying wonders from Satan himself (2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- r) He deceives the unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
- s) The Antichrist is destroyed and thrown into the lake of fire at the second advent (Revelation 19:19,20).

4. PRINCIPLES

- a) Satan is the ruler of this world (John 16:11).
- b) World domination and internationalism is Satanic in origin (Genesis 11:6-9).
- c) Miracles, signs and lying wonders are strategies employed by Satan to deceive (John 8:44, Matthew 7:13-23).
- d) Economic control of the individual enslaves that individual (Proverbs 22:7).
- e) Ultimately vast power creates the delusion that the person in control is God (Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 14:13,14).
- f) The antichrist will not be revealed until after the Rapture of the Church when the Holy Spirit who restrains him (and indwells all Christians) will be removed from the world for a time, returning to a way of operating that was normal for the Age of Israel rather than the Church Age. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7)
- g) A few years of power is not worth an eternity of suffering.
- h) Eventually every woman and man must account to Jesus Christ as judge if she/he does not accept Jesus Christ as Saviour (Revelation 20:12-15).
- i) At a point, people become so hardened to God that God gives them over to their own delusions (2 Thessalonians 2:11, Romans 1:28).

j) The Antichrist is a person, not to be confused with the many antichrists of (1 John 2:18) or the "spirit of antichrist" of (1 John 4:3)

5. In the Tribulation there will be a counterfeit trinity with Satan (father), the Antichrist (son) and False Prophet (spirit).

6. Names given to the Antichrist:-

- a) The seed of Satan (Genesis 3:15)
- b) The little horn (Daniel 7:8)
- c) The king of fierce countenance (Daniel 8:23)
- d) The prince that shall come (Daniel 9:26)
- e) The desolater (Daniel 9:27)
- f) The wilful king (Daniel 11:36)
- g) The man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
- h) The son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
- i) The lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:8)
- j) The Antichrist (1 John 2:22)
- k) The beast (Revelation 11:7)

7. Characteristics:-

a) He is called the seed of Satan (Genesis 3:15). Just as Jesus Christ had a supernatural birth being born of a virgin, it may be that there will be something supernatural about the birth of the Antichrist. It is likely that Satan will impregnate a human woman and thus be the father of the Antichrist in a similar way to the angelic infiltration of Genesis 6:2.

b) In Daniel 9:26 he is said to be of the people who destroyed the Temple. The Roman Empire destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. The Antichrist may therefore be of Roman origin.

c) The identity of the man of sin will not be 100% clear until the start of the Tribulation, although he may be fairly prominent in politics prior to that period. He will not be revealed until after the Rapture of the Church when the Holy Spirit who restrains him (and indwells all Christians) will be removed from the world for a time (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7). In the middle of the Tribulation, he sets himself in the Temple calling himself God (v4-8).

d) In Daniel 9:27 the start of the Tribulation is marked by the signing of a seven year covenant between the Antichrist and the nation of Israel. When Israel signs the covenant, God issues a decree of destruction against the whole earth (Isaiah 28:14-22) - the judgements of the book of Revelation. The Antichrist is shown as the rider on the white horse of Revelation 6:1 who brings the promise of (false) peace.

e) The rise of the Antichrist to power:-

- i) In Daniel 8:23-25 he is seen as a skilful leader, involved in the occult power (v23), will war against the Jews (v24), and will rise to power through deceit (v25).
- ii) In Daniel 11:36-39 he shall do what he wants, claiming to be God and exalting himself (v36), he will repudiate all religious practices from his ancestors (v37). He however will honour a god whom his ancestors did not know (v38) who assists

him to power (v39), this god being Satan. He will accept the offer of the kingdoms of the world which our Lord refused in the wilderness.

iii) In 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 we are told that his coming is according to the energising of Satan accompanied by miracles, signs and wonders.

iv) During the first half of the Tribulation, he gains political control of the ten groups that make up a One World Government. This includes the removal of three of the ten leaders (Daniel 7:23-24, Revelation 17:12-17)

v) He also destroys the One World Church ("Mystery Babylon") that has operated in the first half of the Tribulation (Revelation 17:5,16.) In Revelation 11 he is able to kill the two witnesses who have been causing him major problems. They however will be resurrected much to his dismay.

f) The death and resurrection of the Antichrist. In Daniel 11:40-45 he kills the kings of the North, South and East, and in v 45 he will come to his end and none shall help him. However in Revelation 13:3 he receives a fatal wound but the fatal wound is healed. This suggests that the Antichrist dies and is resurrected by the power of Satan. This miracle deceives the world that the Antichrist is God and the world now worships him.

Pause Believer - Application Points to Reflect upon.

1. While a number of items in the doctrine above may not finally play out how they are tentatively explained above, the key things about "A-C" are clear.
2. What are we seeing today that indicates such a "world-ruler" is becoming possible with the consent of many at least initially?
3. Religious groups are coalescing around the Vatican and WCC. We can see how the religious leadership of the world could support a popular leader and encourage others to give him power to solve the 2030 Agenda problems!
4. The world power-money elite are already speaking openly about a "leader" to truly co-ordinate things, but in reality they think, to do what they want. This man will surprise them all and kill them all. He shares power with no human being other than the demon possessed ruler of Israel (the False Prophet).
5. Watch for world-uniting agendas from groups – the A-C needs the world ready for centralized control and ready to pass their power over...
6. What creates more chaos? That can be a really effective preparatory activity – the more worried people become the more they will think about passing power over to someone who offers to "really sort things out...". Finally, that means 'sort people out', and that means death for over 7 Billion people under this man eventually...

CHRISTIAN LIFE – AMBASSADORSHIP

1. An Ambassador does not appoint himself, she/he is appointed by the nation he/she represents, and this is who we are. We are appointed by God. (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to know the enemy and his plans but know our role better and do it until the end,

2. An Ambassador does not support themselves. We are sustained and protected by God (Philippians 4:19) and we rest in God's provisions. We seek support by prayer not begging letters and desperate appeals to anyone else.
3. An Ambassador does not represent themselves. We represent God on earth. (Matthew 28:19-20) and so we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, becoming more like the Lord so as to better represent the Lord's interests and speak His Truth.
4. An Ambassador does not belong to the nation to which he/she is sent. Positionally we are in heaven, experientially we are in the world (Philippians 3:20, John 15:19) and so we need to be exactly where the Lord wants us. Re-positioning is a matter of prayer and God's direction – not our planning as to where we are to go for any personal purpose or reason.
5. All Ambassadors have instructions in written form. We have the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2). While we wait for any provision or direction we build our knowledge of our operations manual.
6. An Ambassador representing her/his country does not treat any insult as personal. (Matthew 5:11-12). The enemy hates us as it hated the Lord. John 15:18ff.
7. When an Ambassador is recalled from a country it is tantamount to declaration of war. After the Rapture there will be massive warfare on earth. All Christians will be recalled at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) but until then we do what we are ordered to do. We walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit so as to receive our orders when they are needed.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – REWARDS AND CROWNS – What We Lose if we get distracted!

1. Rewards and Salvation are carefully separated in the Scriptures. Salvation is a free gift from God, rewards are for meritorious service in the power of the Spirit within the Plan of God for our life. Rewards are for work we are called to do, not for tasks that others have responsibility for.
2. Salvation - a free gift to the lost (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23, John 4:10) - an everlasting possession (John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47).
3. Rewards - to the saved who faithfully work for the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, Revelation 22:12) - distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10), which takes place after the Rapture of the Church (Revelation 19:7,8). God desires to reward us for faithful service – our challenge is to be worthy of rewards by actually “doing” what we have been asked to do – faithful service in the task we are called to, where we are called to serve.

4. Rewards are often pictured in Scripture in the form of civic/athletic “crowns”:-
 - a) The incorruptible crown - for faithfulness in exercising self control on the narrow path we were called to walk. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
 - b) The crown of glory - for faithfulness in suffering on our path doing the Lord’s will (not for any suffering we have chosen to endure for our own purposes). (1 Peter 5:4)
 - c) The crown of life - for faithfulness under trial on the path, persevering in the path the Lord desires us to walk. (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10)
 - d) The crown of righteousness - for faithful testimony to the truth. (2 Timothy 4:8)
 - e) The crown of rejoicing - for faithful service. (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20, Philippians 4:1)
5. Rewards come after you have entered into the Plan of God through regeneration and grown spiritually to the point where you can serve in the Lord’s work safely and powerfully.
6. Rewards are based on the use of divine operating assets including the filling of the Holy Spirit. Obedient walking is the daily challenge.
7. You can lose rewards by not being obedient, but never lose your salvation. (1 Corinthians 3:14-15, 2 Timothy 2:12,13)

GOD – DIVINE INSTITUTIONS

1. “Divine institutions” is the name given by the Reformers of the 17th century to the Biblical building blocks which are absolutely necessary for the efficient working and stability of the human race within the context of the angelic conflict. They are available for both believer and unbeliever alike – they are our divinely appointed “Health and Safety” framework for survival on planet earth.
2. There are four divine institutions:-
 - a) Free Will. (Genesis 2:16-17, John 7:17)
 - b) Marriage. (Genesis 2:22-24, Matthew 19:5-6)
 - c) Family. (Genesis 2:24, 4:1, Psalm 68:6, Ephesians 6:1-4)
 - d) National Government. (Genesis 9:6, 11:9, Romans 13:1-7)
3. Within the four are principles ordained by God for the protection, orderly function, survival and blessing of the human race, and these are therefore targeted specifically by Satan and his support crew. The attacks upon these principles builds towards the last days, as anything that Satan’s team can do to undermine political, social, cultural and mental stability will increase the desperation of the unsaved to welcome the Anti-Christ.
4. Satanic attack on the things that God holds sacred is Satan’s policy of “evil”. Anything that attacks, or violates the four “divine institutions” is evil: -

a) All violation of the free will of human beings is evil doing – drugs and alcohol rot out free will and pushing these evils is satanic policy and its growing today.

b) All violation of marriage is evil doing. Adultery and all forms of promiscuity, pornography, or other perversions (child abuse, etc), is evil doing. Note the enemy's forces for they will always encourage immorality, for it rots the heart.

c) All attacks on the sacredness of the family are evil doing. Child abuse comes into all three categories as one of the great evils. Forcing families to work so hard they cannot train and comfort children is a big thrust today. Exhausted people are desperate and often angry people. Poverty enters the picture here, not as a thing in itself, for it can be caused by crime, alcohol and drugs, but where it impacts family it undermines all good things. Forced atheistic or pagan education is another big push today where children are being indoctrinated with evil policies.

d) All attacks upon the integrity of the nation state are evil, for God has established the nations as his way to limit evil and enhance opportunities to spread the gospel, reversing the curse of the tower of Babel. Watch for all internationalism as it will have the enemy behind it – for he wants chaos on a world stage to enhance world control. The use of forced migrations/refugees is one tool being actively used today to attack financial viability of western nations, but they will survive, just become more centralized in their control.

5. Every divine institution is dependant for its function on the previous institutions: nations depend on families, families depend on marriage, marriage depends on freedom.

6. Believers are not to be known for attacking these four divine institutions; we are to be known as people who respect them and uphold them at all times. Watch for those who do not. I have reflected on recent posts on UN websites and my heart has sank, for the attacks on the four divine institutions are seriously picking up. No despair in this brethren, but just the sad recognition of where we are in history.

Our next doctrinal study is on **RELIGION** and by that we mean, man's attempt to reach to God and establish a sense of certainty for their future. Religion is man's attempt to feel good and even do good, but on his own terms. It is relative and human-righteousness and it is all "filthy rags" in God's sight, just as Cain's religion of naturalism and worship of nature leads to his brother's murder! **Isaiah 64:6-9, Genesis 4:1-16.**

Of all the satanic "pack of cards" he plays, the religious card is the most devious and destructive of present joy and in robbing the lost of meaningful and happy eternal life. Fake religion promises intimacy with "the divine" (however you understand it – they say).

But, it is deceptive lying about the fatal flaw in its own logic – the “Sin Barrier” is too great for any woman or man to reach to God with acceptance. God must open the way by grace, and HE has done so in Christ Jesus.

Religion says, “don’t obsess about ‘the man jesus’, for there are many paths up the mountain and we can all find our way there. God just wants us to be sincere and do our best!” This is the filthiest of all lies on this temporary planet and it is Satan’s best tool to ensure the lost remain so. Unity between the world’s religions is a major push of the enemy’s team, and we have God’s Word on it, it will be successful in the Tribulation Period and will lead to the worship of Satan himself.

RELIGION

1. Satan's religion is a humanly acceptable one: no sin, no judgement, no required Saviour and no Hell. Satan appears as an angel of light and invites all to walk in pleasant fields towards death with no fears. (2 Corinthians 11:13-19, 26). It is deception right into the jaws of Hell itself and many drop into Hell thinking they have a different destination. Our Lord’s story of the “Rich Man and Lazarus the Beggar”, **Luke 16:19-31** hits this hard!

2. Many pastors in the churches are servants of Satan's policy, knowingly or unknowingly by teaching a false gospel – that is anything but “good news” for eternity, but appears to be all sweetness and light. (Isaiah 30:12, Jeremiah 2:8, 2 Peter 2:1-10)

3. Satan's strategy towards unbelievers is to keep them blinded to the truth of the real gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Colossians 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). The Gospel message has “good news” but the alternative is “bad news”, for to reject the truth is to embrace the lie of the enemy and face eternity with Satan and his demon crew. John 3:15-36.

4. Satan's strategy towards believers is:-

- a) To confuse by false religious teaching. (Matthew 7:15, Romans 16:18)
- b) To appeal to pride in religious nonsense. (2 Corinthians 10:12)
- c) To promote idolatry as part of false religion. (Habakkuk 2:18,19)
- d) To promote legalism as the way/path of true religion. (1 Timothy 1:7-8)

5. Satan's policy calls for counterfeit faith, a fatally fake religious structure that locks people into falsehood until they face Hell itself, or if believers, arrive in heaven having been robbed of all rewards.

- a) Counterfeit gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)
- b) Counterfeit pastors. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
- c) Counterfeit communion. (1 Corinthians 10:19-21)
- d) Counterfeit doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:1)
- e) Counterfeit righteousness. (Matthew 19:16-28)
- f) Counterfeit way of life. (Matthew 23)
- g) Counterfeit power. (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10)

h) Counterfeit gods. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Having seen the lie let us embrace the truth of our so great salvation. Hebrews 2:3.

SALVATION

1. Salvation is the gift of God by grace through faith.
2. We cannot work for our own salvation - we must receive it as a gift. (Ephesians 2:8, 9, Romans 4:4-5)
3. The only means of salvation is by trusting that Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried and raised from the dead. He therefore paid the penalty for sin, and conquered death. (Acts 16:30-31, John 3:16, 14:6, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
4. We are saved so that we can serve God. (Ephesians 2:8-10) Our good works done in the Holy Spirit's power simply show that we have been saved. James 1-3.
5. Salvation includes many other doctrines such as Imputation, Justification, Redemption, Propitiation, Reconciliation and Sanctification.

I cover some other doctrines further on in the book where they are most relevant.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING ABOUT THESE LAST DAYS WE FIND OURSELVES IN THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

FROM THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS www.ebcwa.com

(Composite Message combining **Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21** Accounts.)

Please follow up this summary study below by examining closely Volume 20 of the Harmony from the website and examine every verse closely and every doctrine that emerges.

Our purpose in this study is to identify the "tricks and tools" being used by Anti-Christ's preparation-team in our present day, but there is much, much more here in this great Discourse. I will be simply going through the Harmony and making specific comments relating to our question alone. Follow up in your bibles in the three passages above.

THE THREE QUESTIONS ASKED BY THE DISCIPLES ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

“And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, the disciples Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

- 1. Tell us, when shall these things be?*
- 2. and what shall be the sign of thy coming when all these things shall be fulfilled,*
- 3. ... and of the end of the age?”*

Comment - like us the disciples had everything combined in their theology and expected the Lord to fulfil all their prophetic expectations in a simple and straight forward way, by setting up His Millennial Kingdom and winding everything up. We also can seek simplicity, but the reality is far more complex and needs lots more study and revelation from the Lord, and we may not be able to comprehend all the answers yet ourselves, even if we study every passage that will be revealed after this night.

They ask firstly about the destruction of the temple (with “not one stone upon another”) that the Lord has spoken of as they walked past the great gates. He will answer that question as the discourse unfolds, for it is 38 years and a few months away at this point (AD 70).

Their second question relates to our subject of “A-C’s Prep-team’s” work presently, for the efforts of the enemy’s team demonstrates that they believe they are running out of time, and that the “day” to rule is drawing close. We don’t pay heed to any “date-setting” of the enemy’s forces, but we will pay close attention to the Lord’s warning “signs” that He is “at the door” and the Tribulation period is very close.

Their final question relates to the end of the Age of Israel, and simultaneously the end of the “Times of the Gentiles”, and they both end with the Second Advent, and then the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom.

GENERAL SIGNS OF THE TESTING CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CHURCH AGE

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Take heed that any man deceive you. For many shall come in my name and the time draweth near, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many: go ye not therefore after them. And ye shall hear of wars, rumours of wars and instability see that ye be not troubled or terrified for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not immediately.’”

Comment - Satanic deception is the dominant threat throughout the Church Age, and the Lord’s warning remains in place until His Second Advent, for the enemy desires the chaos of mind, misery of life and finally the death of all the human beings he can fool into following him. By this evil “fruit” of false-messianic hope, and wars that murder millions, is the team of the enemy known.

The enemy’s team will try to deceive and upset the mental-spiritual equilibrium of anyone they can who will pay them heed, but Satan is also a destroyer, and he will destroy more than hope for those who embrace his lies. By false messiah’s he destroys

genuine faith and eternal confidence, and by “cold and hot wars” he destroys the sanity and lives of many. These are “Team A-C” fruits, but not signs that the Tribulation has begun or will in a matter of days.

Note the Lord’s warning carefully. False Christs and World Wars are a sign of the end but not of an imminent end. Don’t be terrified by world war, even as millions (and billions in the tribulation) die in them, for the end is not “right now”. No amount of awfulness is an indication of the imminent end – just that it is drawing close. These are crucial words of encouragement as we await the fulfilment of Ezekiel 38-39 before the Tribulation, for that war may see millions incinerated! This level of awfulness will destroy the sanity and faith of many who have casual or fake faith – it mustn’t destroy us.

SIGNS OF THE CLOSENESS OF THE TRIBULATION

“Then said he unto them, nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: great earthquakes shall be in divers places, there shall be famines and pestilences in divers places, troubles, fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

Comment - The phrase, “beginning of sorrows” gives us a clue to the significant signs in the text here. The preparation for the Tribulation period is characterized by the very specific signs that are out of the ordinary in previous history of the Church Age.

1. World-Wide wars.
2. Earthquakes in diverse/strange places.
3. Famines and Plagues not seen that weirdly/widely powerful.
4. Signs in the heavens that are portents of things to come – blood moons/pollution...

All these have been discussed by Dr Moses in his prophetic updates as part of the 100 Trends that indicate we are drawing close to the Tribulation Period time frame. They seriously begin around 1917 and have steadily accelerated to our present time. The time frame Jesus will later give in this Discourse (below) is that of the “days of Noah”, which were 120 years of warning before judgment came.

No date setting here, for the Rapture could occur at any moment, but the approximate time-frame may be 120 years from the first signs are clear. If this time period is correct some people will immediately argue it’s no later than 2037 but that is to get distracted. Hear us here - We don’t operate on the basis of 2037 at all, but use the “days of Noah” time-frame reference as the early church did, as a warning of proximity – no time to waste in speculation brethren – focus! What does the Lord want us to do – He is at the door.

PERSECUTION OF THE BELIEVERS

“But before all these take heed to yourselves, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the councils, synagogues and into prisons, and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten. Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.”

Comment - Note, before all these things occur there will be persecution of genuine believers with the court systems used to silence all accurate and strong Bible teaching that isn't "peace and love and acceptance" of all the religions of the world. This is becoming a very serious thing in the Western World, whereas it previously was common only in the Moslem or pagan-religious world.

The West has moved in recent years to directly oppose all open Gospel street-preaching and any talk of exclusive claims by Jesus and the Church. Orthodox Greece will jail anyone who tries to preach Acts 17 on the streets of Athens, even though it's still carved in stone on the Areopagus hill. It is now illegal in the UK and many places in the USA to preach on streets and the reading of the Bible and prayer is banned in schools and public places.

Jesus challenge to us – see these things as simply signs of the enemy's prep-work for their coming "day in the sun" and so be more prayerful and ready to stand and in Holy Spirit power preach the truth and face the consequences of that.

UNIVERSAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

“And the gospel must first be published among all nations.”

Comment - Achieved in our days with internet everywhere and instant "Google Translate" operating world-wide, plus missions dedicated to this also.

RESPONSES INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

“But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate, settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye because all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist what you say.”

Comment - As you face the hatred of the States that used to support and protect missionaries, just relax into the Lord's arms and the Holy Spirit's power, and by Spirit-filled witness proclaim the truth fearlessly and take whatever comes from the forces of the enemy. We are being challenged to see that as we slide down towards the Tribulation period it will be more and more costly to be a believer. Relax into Jesus' arms, pray always and serve as the Holy Spirit guides brethren!

BETRAYAL AND HATRED OF BELIEVERS

“Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.”

Comment - When the going gets tough the “fake toughs” tend to “get going” and betray the genuine believers. Expect betrayal by false brethren as we advance towards the end, for remember the enemy will put his best team members into the local churches, for there they can do the most damage. Don't be upset by betrayal – see it in terms of this Discourse – as a sign that the time clock is seriously ticking, and you and I just need to pray more and focus forward with more ruthless determination – **2 Timothy 1:7**.

TRIUMPH FOR THE BELIEVER

“However, there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved/delivered.”

Comment - These are our present “daily orders” brethren. As the enemy's team become more over-confident and arrogant (always a “fruit” that will be present in “Satan and “A-C's” prep-team) they will think they can humiliate and destroy us totally, but they cannot. We are Christ's and He rules over and protects us.

Our orders are clear – “Endure hardships” on the narrow path. “Be Patient” for the Plan is God's, not your plan believer, and so endure the wait to be sure of God's guidance and then persevere on the path to the very end and you will be “delivered” from the enemy's arrogant assaults. **Isaiah 55:6-12** and **Jeremiah 10:23-24** always are encouraging.

SIGNS OF THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

Comment - These words and some further ones below were life-saving for the believers during the First Jewish Revolt in the years AD 66-70. There was no doubt about the fate of the City and Temple at Jerusalem once “Messiah was cut off” as Daniel had foreseen. **Daniel 9:24-26**. The end was to be a “flood” of violence, and the city and temple would be destroyed. Over 2 million would die or be enslaved by the last days of the rebellion AD 70. To get this wrong, or ignore these verses was to die or be enslaved for the Jewish churches of Judea.

Once the church members saw that the Roman Armies were coming, they were to prepare to leave the city, not to even think about heading for the city of Jerusalem if they were anywhere else. Pregnancy was to be avoided once they saw things developing for it would be hard enough to escape if fit, healthy and unencumbered, but pregnant or with a young child it would be a nightmare.

Intelligent thinking was called for, not just “going forth and multiplying”, and it still is called for today in every decision a believer makes. Those not taking the Word of the Lord seriously faced real dangers that they didn’t need to face if they just paused and reflected.

Our preparation today means we get fit and stay fit and healthy and be ready to do whatever is required of us, to ensure we do the Lord’s work we are called to, as the days darken. We do not focus on the darkness, but as “Light-Bearers” we show the light of Christ to those who are “losing the plot” around us. We are to be “Salt” and “Light”, not panic artists!

GREAT TRIBULATION - FIRST HALF

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

Comment - Deception again with false prophets is indicated as a major sign that the Tribulation is drawing close, and they will clearly multiply in that terrible period. Applying the “rules of the prophet” is critical in our day, just as it was in earlier ages, and the fake-prophets that abound today can be silenced quickly when the rules are applied from the scriptures. **Deuteronomy 18:15-22**.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand where it ought not, in the holy place, (let him that reads understand,)”

Comment - The modern “A-C Preparation Crew” appear to be careful about worship of any idols openly, but their embracing of modern paganism and the return of the old “gods” (read demons) are part of the preparation for the events of the Tribulation.

Remember the words of Scripture, **Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Joshua 23:7-11, 1 Corinthians 10:16-22**. Do not even mention the names of the pagan gods as it gives power to the demons behind them. Modern attempts to bring back paganism and the demonic forces behind the paganism, are being very successful and it appears to be a major “policy plank” of the enemy’s team in the EC and USA especially.

RESPONSE TO THE ABOMINATION

“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains. Let him which is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.”

Comment - Being ready to move quickly is the theme that we will see emerging from this Discourse and while these events are not our challenge, as they come after we are gone, the Lord’s order to be quick to respond to the facts remains critical for our survival and ministry. We must spot the enemy’s tricks and avoid them or counter-act them.

A TIME OF GREATEST DISASTER

“For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.”

DECEPTION BY THE ENEMIES OF GOD

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall seduce even the elect. Wherefore

if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things”.

Comment - Being cynical towards all super-spiritual claims is a good thing. We are often too polite to religious fakes and fraudsters. The Word of Truth alone is our safe guide, for the enemy has power and as we draw into these last days in earnest we will see serious miracle workers. Even in New Zealand we have seen the Hindu temples have miracles occurring, idols drinking milk and dramatic healings that are real, but demonic in origin, designed by the enemy to deceive and hold people to their death and then eternity in Hell.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

Comment - These words were life-saving to the Jerusalem Church as they saw the Roman Legionary Eagles on the hills and knew that the bodies would lie thick on the ground there, and they did. The church believed Jesus’ words and fled the city when the gates were opened and unguarded for a couple of days, and were not fooled into thinking there would be a last minute deliverance for the city by Messiah coming. They prepared and packed up their houses to flee as soon as they saw the Eagles, and they fled on the first day they could. No delays!

NATURAL DISTURBANCES AT THE END OF THE TRIBULATION

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven.

Men's hearts will be failing them for fear and for looking at those things which are coming on the earth for the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.”

Comment - Climate Change/fluctuations are truly occurring and are alarming for many, but study meteorology and realise that they have occurred before and were in the past worse than they are today, but don't be a “climate change denier”, for the Bible is quite clear, it will get way worse than it is today. Revelation describes major climate catastrophe caused by volcanism in the Tribulation – it will be truly fear-invoking. Recognize however that the enemy's main tool is anxiety production and climate change is simply used by them. Do not be panicked or fooled by this, for the earth will

survive, although there will be climate and military carnage. Eyes on the Lord alone now and for those in the Tribulation – eyes on the Word and Lord alone, not the weather map or barometer and earthquake data daily..... You're in the Lord's hands not the met service!

SIGN OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

But when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Comment - Be aware that mockery of the Lord's Second Advent by Hollywood especially, is no accident, it's part of the A-C Prep-Team working to undermine any literal faith in a real return of the Lord. They must mock all literalism in relation to the Bible, as when things start to happen, they don't want people saying, “Doesn't the Bible teach this”. Mockery of the Bible is increasing, and we need to counter it by seriously pointing out literal fulfilments of the prophecies for the First Advent and then make the point – wouldn't it be logical to expect the Second Advent prophecies to be literally fulfilled also?

CHRIST GATHERS THE NATION ISRAEL

“And then He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.”

Comment - The regathering of Israel in the last one hundred years has been extra-ordinary, especially since World War 2, but this verse tells us that large numbers of Jews remain in the diaspora until the very end when the Lord arrives on the earth personally. The enemy is actively trying to reduce Jews in the land – they hate modern Israel. The present Abraham Accords have seriously upset them and put back their agenda of isolating Israel. This verse reminds us that while just over half of Jews are in the land it may not swing too far further before the end.

PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth and putteth forth leaves, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things come to

pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”

Comment - Once again the “fig tree” traditionally was seen to be Israel. The military dominance of Israel with at least half of world Jews back in the land is the major sign that things are close to the end. They have actually had two Jubilees since the Balfour Declaration, 1967 (Capture of the West Bank and Jerusalem), and 2017 (Jerusalem declared Capital).

DURABILITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

Comment - Do not do any “date-setting” as it is absolutely clear from the Lord’s words here – no-one knows the day and hour of the Lord’s return. We can say it’s likely soon, but anyone being too definite is probably working for the enemy’s team, with their false prophecies being undermining of other’s faith.

THE SUDDEN OCCURRENCE OF THE SECOND ADVENT

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

Comments - The time frame of the “days of Noah” (Noe in Greek) may refer to both the immorality and disinterest in spiritual things characterizing these last days, but also may refer to the 120 year time frame, but we cannot be sure when it starts – is it 1917 or another date? Note your thoughts but recognize that the purpose of these “signs” is to draw your attention to the closeness of the time frame, not provide an exact one. The statement above applies – beware of those who think they have the key to the cupboard where God keeps His secrets – they don’t have the “key”, and they are destructive of the faith of others when they are proved false. The Jerusalem Church waited until the signs were clear, then they packed their houses and were ready to leave at a day’s notice and they did when they could. The “window” for escape was 12-24 hours only and they moved.

VIGILANCE IN YOUR DAILY WALK

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

Comments - Satan’s team are focused on getting people to relax and unwind and certainly not think about any “end” at all. Disaster is coming upon the lost but Satan wants his team to tranquilize the fools who have been deceived by him and them. Any tranquilization will do, be it drugs, alcohol, social action, community projects, save the planet, get a new degree, take up a hobby.... It doesn’t matter as long as they don’t think about eternity and judgment. Our “Orders” are given in **Ephesians 5:14-21**.

WATCHING AND PRAYING

“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

Comment - God’s order is always “watch” and “pray”. Be suspicious of all who would get us away from the Word of Truth onto the “podcasts” of men.

THE GOOD SERVANT - THE BAD SERVANT

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.”.... “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for

him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Comments - The enemy will always do anything he/she can to stop you doing the ordinary but powerful things that the Lord has called you to do as His faithful servant. Notice the A-C Prep-team are busy in and out of churches trying to distract the believers into doing anything except the caring for and feeding the flock. John was moved very specifically to add Chapter 21 to the Gospel, and we see why as we read it – forget the destiny of others but focus solely on what the Lord wants you to do! Prioritize the care, protection and feeding of the flock of God! Note the agendas of the main churches today, for they are 2030 UN agendas, not what Jesus told Peter!

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Comments - Note the significance of this parable in the context of the entire Discourse. Be wherever the Lord has led you to serve, Holy Spirit filled (oil in your lamp) and ready to leap to your feet when the Lord arrives, or you are required to follow another of "HIS" orders. That theme of readiness, alertness to the Lord's presence, and watchfulness for the details of the Plan to unfold before you. Eyes on the Lord alone, whereas the enemy's team want you focused on anything else.

THE GOOD AND EVIL SERVANTS

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Comments - Focus on Eternal Rewards believer and serve with your focus on obedience to your assigned task upon the earth that you might hear the Lord's “well done, good and faithful servant” in heaven. The enemy's team will always mock any thought of heaven, and say things like, “pie in the sky when you die bye and bye...”, “so heavenly minded but of no earthly good”, then they will try to get you active on some 2030 agenda item. Check the origin of their philosophy, for they will quote scripture and twist it to get it speaking like a UN official. Spot the lies and distortions! No distractions!

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

Comments - This passage is a good one to separate the “sheep and goats” theologically. Are your advisors in the church truly sheep of the flock or are they the enemy’s “goats”, make-believers with the fruit of the enemy in their lives and in the results of their work. Always ask of any theological teaching, does this teaching make me more like Jesus, more like the apostles, more like the early church, more passionate for evangelism of lost souls, more focused upon eternity? If the answer to any of these is “NO”, then the theology is rubbish and possibly enemy philosophy!

Pause and reflect also, for this passage is quoted by all the “social action” crowd and they apply it to the drug-addicted homeless, and the pedophile prisoners being visited. Now it can be applied there if you are called to share the Lord’s love with such people but read more carefully and you will discover that it applies primarily to the care of the

persecuted and abused churches of other places who the Lord holds you personally responsible to assist.

The A-C Prep-team spoke the phrase, “Black Lives Matter”, and yet they ignored the murder of Nigerian and Sudanese Christians by the hundreds at a time and focused all their attention upon Black Americans who were often engaged in criminal activity – how was that tolerated? The majority of the Media are on the enemy’s team today. Don’t complain about it, preach the truth and do not be distracted from the plight of our African, Iranian, Burmese, Ukrainian and Russian brethren who are suffering, and we are responsible to help in any way we can – at least to pray for them daily. No distractions brethren – no distractions by the enemy’s team but focus solely upon the Lord’s orders to us.

Let us pause and reflect further, bringing in other texts than just the Olivet Discourse.

What are the Characteristics of the “Latter Days/End Times”

As we focus on hearing the Lord’s “well done, good and faithful servant”, Matthew 25:21, Luke 19:17, so let us hold the Word of God as more precious than life itself to us.

2 Timothy 1:7 *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

During the Covid-19 Crisis in 2021 we republished the texts on Daniel and Revelation as we could see that the rulers of this present world were using the crisis to expand control and surveillance measures in almost every nation. Many Governments had continued to create fear and anxiety even in February of 2023, when none needed to exist by then for most populations. We could see that believers needed to stabilize themselves in the Word of God, but especially understand end times prophetic words.

As one US Presidential hopeful observed in 2020, the Covid Crisis is too good an opportunity to ignore.... The enemy’s “prep-team” certainly used the CV-19 Crisis as a great opportunity to expand centralized economic control, but also to pass legislation that was evil itself. In New Zealand this meant, “education reform” that expanded deviant sexual education to children, expanded abortion to term, euthanasia approved. It was bizarre indeed to see a government devastating the economy by control and closures to “protect the elderly and vulnerable”, and yet passing legislation to kill the unborn child and allow the sick and old to end their lives early! Don’t look for logic in Satan’s crew, just spot their agenda and speak the truth.

When the Lord spoke about the need for the last generation of believers to identify the signs that the “beginning of sorrows” (**Matthew 24:8**) had begun, his words were faithfully recorded as part of the Olivet Discourse, as we have seen above, but few have taken the time to comprehend this fully, or seriously received the warnings, but let us

take all of God's Word seriously and seek God's path for our lives here and now – for these are our days, and we are here to live for Jesus' Glory in them.

In our initial letter to the church and our supporters in 2021, accompanying the two revised books (Daniel and Revelation), we noted the critical importance of calm, logical and intelligent understanding of biblical prophecy, but we now see that even more is required in the Post-Covid world we now find ourselves in. All the "Last Words" books needed to be reflected upon in these "Last Days" before the Lord's return and we thoroughly revised them all again by the end of 2024 and these revised editions are on the www.ebcwa.com website.

The Early Church had the mental attitude to act at all times as if the Lord is "at the door" and given the fulfillment of all prophetic indicators of the "beginning of sorrows" that our Lord spoke of, it's high time we all embraced that mental attitude also. The speed of events has picked up in a way that even unbelievers are approaching me in my clinical counselling work and asking about Revelation and Daniel, and television programs are being made to try to distract from their teaching. The enemy knows his time is short and he is energetic in his malice – we must be more so in grace, love, and truth – and move forward in Holy Spirit power – for "greater is HE that is in us than he that is in the world".
1 John 4:4, 2 Timothy 1:7.

The "**Last Words**" **Volumes** on the www.ebcwa.com website are as follows.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Book 1 | Daniel – overview of world history, from Daniel's own days right to the end. |
| Book 2 | Ezra's Chronicles - last words of the "Great Scribe" that the Lord referred to in Luke 11:45-52 . |
| Book 3 | 1 and 2 Peter |
| Book 4 | 2 Timothy |
| Book 5 | Hebrews |
| Book 6 | Revelation |
| Book 7 | Jude |
| Book 8 | 1 John - the last book written in the New Testament. |
| Book 9
Abraham | Arabs in the Last Days – Rediscovering the faith of their Father |
| Book 10 | Bible Prophecy to 2022. (The top 100 Trends to observe) |

We at EBCWA believe these words are all for us to understand as we live in the midst of our present strange days – for they are called “weird” by many unbelievers now, and events don’t make sense to most, because they are “Angelic Conflict” saturated, and we must not be ignorant of the enemy’s devices, lest he take advantage of our ignorance and carelessness! **2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:13-15.**

This isn’t the time for “prophecy nuts” to be given a free hand to dominate the air-waves, but for obedient servants of the Lord who are saturated in the truths of these words from the Lord to us to apply. Only in obedience to the Lord’s Word are we safe in these dangerous days.

Even as late as the 1980s many faithful and bible believing commentators said, “we cannot see how these things in Revelation can be literally fulfilled”, and so the tendency of most (since Clement and Origen in the 200s), has been to take the entire book of Revelation as “figurative”, and liberal mockers still hold to this viewpoint, and they vigorously attack those, who like ourselves, call all believers to “pay close attention” to these “last words” about “last days”. Revelation is just one of those we share with you on this site – all will encourage and strengthen you.

We have lived through the Covid years, and we saw that it was not a very intelligent battle against this disease. What benefit did the world governments get by destroying their own economies in this fight against Covid, when they didn’t actually need to?

The self-destructive policies of most governments through Covid were and remain baffling, unless something else is being worked by people behind the scenes, or were the governments of this world of ours just incompetent? Few churches proclaimed **2 Timothy 1:7**, and so many brethren have been unnecessarily debilitated by anxiety! Our message remains, “Look up to the Lord, Take His instructions, and have No Fear brethren!”

There has also been openly selective reporting surrounding many nations’ political election contests, media trying openly to manipulate the population’s opinions, and also ignoring persecution and genocides in Nigeria, China and other places. We have had the bulk of the television news tied up with “gender identity” issues and the American “BLM” protests after the killing of a few people in the USA, and yet Media have barely reported on the genocide and concentration camps for up to 3 million Moslem people in China, and many thousands murdered in Nigeria, Sudan and Kenya!!!

Never have we seen such false and selective reporting like these Covid-years ever before, and with no corrections made when facts emerge later and cannot be buried. We have witnessed things that only occurred previously in propaganda controlled totalitarian societies, and we have all, as biblical thinkers been rightly baffled!

A “Covid-19 pandemic” was finally declared by WHO (only after it was well established), and the world’s trading economy has been destroyed by “lock-downs”, and yet the 2-3% mortality rate that was initially predicted, and is now confirmed at around 1%, (check

statistics on line) and these statistics place Covid-19 well below the thresh-hold for the definition of a true pandemic (12.5% deaths or above). We had WHO and local Health leaders initially saying, with academic clinical studies to prove it, “there is no evidence for the benefits of mask wearing”, and yet doctors and nurses had intelligently been wearing masks in hospitals for years to stop, or at least slow the spread of infections through populations. Then we are all told to be masked....and now Covid is over the “mask mandates” have been attacked... It’s all appearing now like a giant distraction from what Governments have done with their other agendas.

The evidence had always been there for the value of hand-washing, mask wearing in controlling proximity to others, and in keeping social distance (especially stopping hongi, kissing, and breathing over each other, and touching and breathing over each other’s food) to stop spread of all diseases.... In church we have intelligently followed good health practices without apology for them! Yet this was not WHO or MOH (Ministry of Health) policy until the infection got established.....and suddenly, even though the “science” doesn’t apparently back it, the policies were all changed, like a shift of policy in Orwell’s book “1984”. Intelligent, biblically thinking people, have been baffled by the events and “directions” given by authorities/media in these last two years.

We have lived through what some in high places have called “the weirdest years in history” in 2020-2023, but we have been challenged by Scripture to ask, **“What is the Lord doing here?”** The answer would appear to us to be, that the Lord wants us to start thinking at a far deeper level than we have been before about the “Last Words” of Daniel, Ezra and the Apostles, as they urge us to be active in these “Last Days” before the Lord’s Return! We are challenged by daily events to ask the question – are we indeed that last generation? We may not be, but if we are, what manner of people ought we to be? **2 Peter 3:11.**

This is not the time for conspiracy speculation, but deep and thorough thinking by bible believing believers in the Lord. If the end-time period of the “beginning of sorrows” has truly begun, then ask that question - what manner of people ought we to be? Let us stand with our brother Peter in these things!

2 Peter 3:10-18. *“10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

11. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

17. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen”.

There are many crazy things being said by people in churches, which bring the truth of Scripture into disrepute, and so let us remain strictly biblical in our observations, but let us wake up – something significant certainly appears to be happening around us.

There is never a time for panic on God’s path for our lives, and in this next year we need to be calm, clear thinking with Holy Spirit power and biblical truth guiding us, and in all things our lives need to be Christ centered. All time-wasting activities need to be stopped, and we need to focus on the Word and the walk and work the Lord has called us to. Let us hear Paul’s urgent appeal to us from his place of chains in Rome in two passages from his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:14-21 *“14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

17. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19. Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20. But ye have not so learned Christ;

21. If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:”

Ephesians 5:14-21. *“14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*
21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."*

It is our belief that these words need to be taken more seriously than ever before in Church history. Look up **Isaiah 43:10-13** and be further encouraged.

Daniel and Revelation are especially being attacked more vigorously than ever before, and even previously dependable Christian journals are mocking Daniel and Revelation, or referring to them as "apocalyptic literature", and as such to be safely ignored by "modern" people who don't believe in fairy tales! We are personally, at EBCWA, expecting even more attacks on these two books (and the others like Ezekiel and Zechariah), such is the satanic hatred of them. The enemy is clearly determined and increasingly desperate to discredit any study of these prophetic books, and we are equally determined to get them out for all to read, and really explore what God is actually saying to this generation!

It's not time to read another dodgy paper back from the USA or UK; it's time to hear God's Word! We understand that many don't want to look like cultists or nutty "doomsday preppers" to their neighbours, and while we understand that, it is actually irrelevant! We are to be biblical, whatever that ends up looking like. We must be on guard against those who do not believe the real Daniel and John wrote the books named after them.

We stand with the Apostles and honour the authors, but our real concern is to be honouring to God, and we would rather be told by the Lord when we meet Him, "Peter and John, you took my Word way too seriously and literally...". We would rather that be heard from the Lord's lips, for we doubt it will be, but we seriously fear being accused of the "**evil of unbelief**" that the liberals are guilty of.

Hebrews 3:12-19, *"12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

15. While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

17. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

18. And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

19. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."

2 Peter 3:3-7. *“3. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
4. And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.
5. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:
7. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

Let us enter into the “Faith-Rest” mental attitude of the Early Church, for that alone will guard the soul of believers in these last days before the Lord returns, just as it readied them to stand and to suffer for the Lord.

You must really think and study this subject believer, and not back away from hard study and deep thinking. You must do more than just read this introduction and shelve the books. By preparing this for you we have done our job before the Lord, and so yours now begins, but our task also continues, for we too must apply all we read here. **Ezekiel 3:17-21.**

With technical advances happening today that are amazing, population surveillance and control is easier to organize by the day, and we see that the control networks are daily expanding, and we are running out of time on this planet to freely worship, work, and witness. Let us make sure we are doing so to the full, with “whole heartedness”. The internet and cloud may be closed to openly Christian material at some point soon, so please get all good biblical material out widely now. Stabilize your hearts and minds in the Word. Remember again Paul’s “last words” to us from the condemned cell of the Mamertine Prison.

2 Timothy 1:7. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*

To fail to understand the things expressed by the Holy Spirit through these prepared men in these “Last Words” books, in our Post-Covid World, is to be in a very dangerous and unstable place.

Unbelievers are presently hungry for God’s viewpoint, and the old liberal unbelieving nonsense spoken of relating to all these books is well past its “use by date” – so please believer, expose the liberal nonsense by the mockery it deserves.

You either know the things that are recorded in these books, or you risk losing your witness in the world of today and may even run the risk of losing your mind as further things unfold.

Brethren, please, read and think through this material. Freely we have received of the Lord and freely we give, but the days we believe are short. Let us proclaim truth loudly while we can.

Notes

LET'S MAKE EVERY CHURCH A BIBLE COLLEGE

As the days darken in our “Post-Covid-19” world we need to think about the challenge to, “buy up the time, for the days are indeed evil”, **Ephesians 5:14-21**. If the Lord leads us to establish a new mission, it is to be with the power of the Holy Spirit **ALONE** that it must be established, for nothing other than God's power, plan and guidance will succeed in the world we find ourselves in.

If God does not build the house those that labour do so in vain. **Psalms 127:1-2**. The time is past to waste on hobbies believer – let's walk in the Spirit and serve the Lord with focused energy and spiritual and mental clarity. Let us do His work alone.

Ephesians 5:14-21 *“14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

We must trust God not people, and depend upon prayer power, not marketing or asking others for resources to fulfil our own plans. Our first principle is therefore PRAYER, for the Lord to open the doors of opportunities, and provide what is needed directly to enable HIS work to be done, with personnel and material provisions. Prayer = His Plan – His Provision.

Walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit alone; do not think you have strategies and plans that will work, for God has THE plan for your life, settled from eternity past, and it alone will work for you now and forever, to the glory of God! **Ephesians 5:14-21,**

Isaiah 55:6-11. *“6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:*

7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

As we think about what the enemy is up to, let's be more focused on our own protocols and fine tune them to stay well above all criticism. It is a strong EBCWA principle that we do not ask anyone for money. We are a “Faith Mission”, and that means we pray, we work, we announce what God is doing and leave provision to the sovereign will of the Lord. If resources are not there and we cannot advance with ease, then we slowly advance prayerfully, but wait upon the Lord for clear direction and resource, for it is the Lord's harvest, not ours. If we cannot move forward through lack of funds, in the Lord's Sovereign Plan, it is because another has the job, or we are not ready.

There is no need or occasion for panic, for although the days are limited before the Lord's return, time isn't "running out"! **God is always on time**, and we are to walk with the Lord in His time and place, Holy Spirit filled, and then alone all that is done will be timely, powerful, and significant eternally. The days are indeed short to the end, but it is God's Plan, and with obedience we can achieve all He wants us to do before we are called home. The challenge is to "faith-rest-obey" His Plan, not panic and try to "second guess" or "help" God by making our own "helpful suggestions".

We pray and wait for open doors, but we do not ever ask others for funds. God will move upon donors as He has moved on us, and HE will weave us together for His Glory and our joy as we see it unfolding. Paul sets us the example when facing apparently closed doors in **Acts 16:6-12**. He is steered away from Ephesus, and yet he will later visit Ephesus and do major work there, but in God's timing. It's all about God's timing, God's power, in God's way! The enemy's team will oppose all such philosophies and try to distract and distort us away from God's path – but "no way"!

If we feel "led" to establish a ministry, but resources are lacking locally, we must get upon our knees and seek the way the Lord wants it established. Our experience is that it will be done without large buildings needing to be purchased, or any equipment initially. God has led us to establish Bible Colleges in ways that do not have any administrative costs, and where the Lord provides the money for the pastors to do what is required on a weekly basis, with each week often beginning without resources to meet current needs.

In these days we walk by faith – we trust, and we pray, and we advance in humility expecting the Lord to provide for His Work, and he always does. It is God's work, not ours, and so all logistical matters are God's concern, and any opposition is a direct attack upon the Lord, and we are to leave it to the Lord to handle, doing only what directed.

In light of the increased enemy-team malice we have reviewed our basic operating principles, but there are few modifications to what the Lord led me to when establishing the first Bible College in 1987. So the message from the Holy Spirit through the Word appears still to be – No Distractions, No Deviations from the Grace-Path, always Teach good biblical Discernment, and always Mock satanic Deceptions.

Our EBCWA Operating Principles

1. If the Lord leads us in a direction the Lord will provide for us there, if it is truly His Plan and His time for the plan to be executed. Pray for the Lord's provisions alone, for it is HIS work, and HIS glory will be seen through it.
2. Do not ask any person for money, simply announce the ministry and advance into it in prayer, seeking the Lord's provision as you go. God rarely gives lots of money

to establish things, but seeks our walk of faith to ensure things are provided when needed in a way that honours Him and brings glory to His holy name. Jesus gets the glory when it is HIS work – not our human efforts. A basic rule for us – we stay away from people looking for glory and fame on earth.... We are not here to build earthly CVs, or gain earthly “New Year’s Honours” from any State; we seek heavenly rewards/crowns only.

3. Gather prayer warriors around you immediately, and have them pray daily for the needs, but open your eyes and seek the humble brother/sister with the loaves and fishes, not the “Rich Young Rulers” who hold onto their wealth and want to feel special if they give anything. God works through the poor and the rich, but only those who commit themselves to him with all they have. We do not “target” wealthy people to ask them to give, we target prayer and remain open to what the Lord wants done, not any plans of arrogant men and women, who may think they know more than they actually do. **Isaiah 55:6-12, Jeremiah 10:23-25.**

4. Do not seek a trouble free path, for it will probably not be the Lord’s path. **Matthew 7:13-23** tells us that the Lord’s path is always the “narrow/constricted” way; the mountain path where only two may walk together, not the crowd. As HE warned us, we have to squeeze through tight places on His path, in prayer and with perspiration and pain at times. Pray, trust, wait, and move as the door opens and you will have the resources to advance through it. God’s good name and glory is at stake in HIS work. It is not our work, nor our ministry, it’s the Lord’s, and He leads, guides and empowers. It’s about His people, not ours!

5. Do not wait for a full bank account, for what is “full”? Step out and minister as the door opens and you have the opportunity, and the funds to arrive at the place of ministry, and so, speak there. If you cannot reach the place, you are not meant to be there. Be ready to personally work in manual labour, your trade, or in any task that you can, to fund your own ministry. All ministries must be LOCAL and supported locally. Do not fall into the “American Prosperity Gospel” trap, for it is a lie from the “A-C prep-team”. Overseas support can be easily severed and it is now clear that it will be in coming years, as money laundering rules take effect, and are used against Christian organizations, not the cyber criminals. We stand with the Apostle Paul, and he worked by day and preached by night, or through the heat of the day when others rested. **Acts 18:1-3, 19:8-12, 1 Corinthians 4:9-16, 15:9-11**

6. EBCWA was established with principles of operation drawn from this Pauline (and biblical) mental attitude. Paul didn’t pray over handkerchiefs and post them out for a fee. He sweated as he worked, and it was those sweat cloths that healed the sick. Many women and men today seek “sweat-less” ministry, but God’s Holy Word indicates that such “false-brethren” are fake and crooked. God works with those who sweat in the work! If you are not ready to do that you must find another group to work with. We are not magicians like Harry Potter with his wand, but workers in the Lord’s vineyard, and so we are ready for the heat of the mid-day sun, and we will work into the night if the

harvest requires it. We do not and will not work with lazy people not ready to sweat, for the Lord never uses such people.

7. EBCWA began with myself (Dr McEwan) very ill, and very poor, through inability to work, and in 2025 I am back in the place of poverty and dependance on the Lord alone. Read Book 150 – be amazed at what God has done and keeps on doing!!! We were given premises to use (we never owned them, and we moved on from them four years later) and started without any funds above those needed to get the building useful. I provided my own transport (or was driven by students) and each person their own bibles and study books, and we started. God blessed greatly as we advanced, but not with money in abundance, just enough to advance to the end with joy in our hearts. Holy Spirit power and direction only – proved by spiritual fruit.

8. In the prisons of Southern and Western Africa we see the same things happening today (2011-2025). The prisoners have a Bible from the Bible Society, and note paper and pencils provided from the guards, and the prisoner-lecturer has an EBCWA study booklet and their Bible, and they begin with nothing else. We now provide the notes on CD/flash drive to be downloaded onto any Prison computers, and the Power Points are included to use when teaching the Diploma Course if the facility has a projector and computer, but these are not needed. In your local situation, my beloved brother and sister, just start with a set of teaching notes and your Bible open, but start with prayer and work with prayer, and end with prayer. We found that the prison authorities themselves provided printing for the notes for prisoners as the courses advanced when they saw the “fruit” in the lives of the prisoners. **Matthew 7:13-23**. Prisons were transformed by the EBCWA Diploma Theology Course, and the prison officers provided help for the men and women they once despised and feared, who they now saw were their brothers or sisters in Christ.

9. **STARTING OUT** - Prepare yourself by studying the Course from the website/USB or printed notes. Be ready to teach it, as God only uses prepared people. Pray for the People, and the Premises as I did all those years ago. Step out to meet the needs with your Bible open and the notes under your arm, and see the Lord provide for what the poor need in your local area. If it is Bibles, pray for that need to be met. If it is for pencils and paper, pray for that to be met, or transport, pray for that.

10. Do not wait for computers, power point projectors, or cars to drive you to the place of ministry! If they are there use them, but do not depend on expensive technology, use the simplest things, for Satan finds the simplest things the hardest to oppose and destroy. Be like Paul, work and provide for your own team yourself and advance into the God anointed ministry.

Trust God, and build a local ministry, and serve the local churches by training the next generation of godly leaders.

Do not depend upon foreigners, for contact with them can be easily cut off by the enemy, as we are seeing happening in the “Post-Covid-19” world, by selective use of

the money laundering laws against Christian missions. Borders can close, but God's work will always get through any locks foolish men put on doors.

Nothing stops the Lord's Plan – pray and advance when, how and as you have been ordered to, and do so in confident assurance that God will empower as you go forward – always forward like the apostles – walking with them into the Word of Life that they received and passed on to us. Jude 3.

Trust the Lord alone and keep as low a profile and “low cost” as you can, for Satan finds it hard to eliminate poor people who have no support structures to destroy. High profile and high budget enterprises can be easily destroyed by scandal and fraud. Do not seek fame; seek service. Do not desire earthly power and wealth; walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit and discover real wealth and power in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 5:14-21** again.

Jeremiah 45:1-5. *“1. The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,
2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch:
3. Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.
4. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.
5. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.”*

We always have prayer, no matter the weather or the state of our health and finances, and we can work and perspire in the Lord's work. With God's provision of power, people and His Plan we are unstoppable by Satan and his dysfunctional team. “Greater is HE that is within us, than he that is in the world”. **1 John 4:4.**

Let us do what the Lord calls us to do, and trust God alone. If God builds, no man, or woman, or demon can tear down God's work unless they have God's personal permission!

Jesus our Saviour, Lord, and King can be trusted. Let us walk with Him, and worship Him as we walk forward into today, “while it is called ‘today’”. We don't have tomorrow yet, let us therefore pray and advance into today's opportunities.

Hebrews 10:21-25, 12:1-3, 13:13-14.

*“10:21. And having an high priest over the house of God;
22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.
23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

24. *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*
 25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*
 12:1. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*
 2. *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
 3. *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*
 13:13. *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*
 14. *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”*

A Significant Tool in the “A-C Prep-Team” Philosophy

THE BLASPHEMOUS NATURE OF THEIR SO CALLED “PROSPERITY GOSPEL”

Satan hasn't needed to invent new evils for thousands of years, for our Old Sin Nature is well known to him since the beginning. In the Garden of Eden, Satan began his path of deceit for mankind by leading our ancestors astray after their own lusts rather than obedience to the Lord's clear commands. This remains the issue – Trust and Obey the Lord, be faithful to His Word, or end up being deceived by the enemy team.

As all marketing executives understand, greed and the desire for wealth and ease is the universal desire of all members of Old Sin Nature dominated mankind. Greed, as one crooked businessman pointed out to me one day, is the only dependable human emotion and drive. Like all lust, greed is **not good**. It is a great evil that despises and abuses all others for the sake of the greedy person's lust being met.

The Bible has warned against this satanic evil from the beginning, but we see it written large in too many modern churches, where prosperity in time is seen as more important than heavenly rewards. The catch cry of these new preachers of unrighteousness is, “have it now and have it later”, or “have it now and don't think about later!” God's Word from the beginning has warned against these servants of the enemy and their viewpoint, but it has satanically deceptive force, and it always has had such power, to those who want an easy life and a comfortable journey through this life.

Many prefer the “Broadway” of life's pleasures to the narrow/constricted and thorn surrounded mountainous path that the Lord tends to call his disciples to follow. Back to **Matthew 7:13-23**. Some very special believers live in the palaces of this world like Daniel, but even for him it was with great threat to life always, and many tests. Most of us are called to walk with Ezekiel and Jeremiah the path of poverty, that all too often involves suffering, sickness, and pressure filled situations. Even Daniel suffered these things, although living in a palace owned by others.

The majority will sadly follow after the lusts of their Old Sin Nature, and so are open to the enemy's team's strategy of deception, but this book is a trumpet call in these last days before events unfold, to think about what the enemy is up to in these days and not be fooled! All believers who wish to walk in spirit and in truth, and honour the Lord, rather than satisfy their lust for ease, power or pleasure are called to be alert to the enemy for through the teaching of the Word alone, "we are not ignorant of his devices".

This is not me being dramatic, it is sad and biblical truth, so please believer hear the Lord's call to your heart. Read also the short paper – "Suffering and the So Called Prosperity Gospel" on the website/USB – and set up your ministry Jesus way, not according to American pagan marketing principles!

Again - Matthew 7:13-23. *"13. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*

Proverbs 6:16-23. *"16. These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. 20. My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: 21. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. 22. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. 23. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:"*

We are told very clearly that persecution and pressures may await us on our road with the Lord through life, and that these things are not the sign of us being in sin but are the sign that the “prince of this present world” may “hate” us for Jesus’ sake. The Lord reminds us that the Holy Spirit is given as the “Comforter” in all such pressures, not as the “money counter” to count our wealth and success, nor to calculate costs and losses! We are not to be guided by monetary considerations, only the Holy Spirit’s leading, into the path God has called us to walk! As Shakespeare noted, we have one brief “strut upon the stage of life”, and it must be God’s Plan, not our own pathetic “frets and lusts” that are followed, or all life and opportunity is wasted indeed.

John 15:18-27. *“18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

In this world he told us we will have “trouble”, not prosperity as the norm, but that through the power of the Lord through the Holy Spirit within (1 John 4:4), we can be overcomers against all pressures that will come in God’s power and provision. God’s provision to achieve all he calls us to do will always be “abundant” (100% sufficient) as Paul and the others found, and we are called to faith-rest our lives in that divine provision to achieve the divine purpose.

Hebrews 11:1-3. *“1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

John 16:33. *“33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

The Lord will supply all we need in order to fulfil the divine commission for our lives, but never to fulfil self-centered prayer lists that are based on our lust for ease, wealth and fame, but the Lord will always “fill up” all we need for worship, service and the needs of others and ourselves to do the on-going work. Let us pray in accordance with the doctrine of prayer, not deliver “shopping lists” to the Lord. He knows our needs. We are here to worship, work, and witness, not waste; not to be like the “rich fool” in **Luke 12:16-23**.

Philippians 4:10-19. *“10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.*

11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

14. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.

19. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

If we have great prosperity, we give thanks and pour it out to the Lord’s work, for all he gives is for service, not self-centered enjoyment. Nothing in the Church Age is for ourselves; it is all for the Church body and to bring glory to the Lord, not ourselves. Always ask of every suggestion for “ministry” - Who gets the glory? Notice Paul’s words in the letter to Philippi above. He is under pressure as many times as he is “abounding”, but in all circumstances, and in all situations he is seeking the glory of the Lord and expecting the Lord to “come through” with all he will need to do the work. The Lord always does! It’s never however about our lust-based desires, but about his Plan and our desire to fulfil it 100% in our short lives. **Habakkuk 2:4, Mark 11:24, Galatians 5:1.**

In case we have any doubts about the apostolic message being the same as the Lord’s words we have Luke’s account of Paul’s ministry below, where he notes his message to the earliest churches after the Lord had raised him from the dead, when he was stoned to death at Lystra. Note the text here, for Paul has apparently been killed by the mob

and then raised from the dead – and he just relaxes and keeps ministering. He always focuses forward, never backwards. He doesn't spend the rest of his life giving "testimony meetings", he serves the Lord's people by training and evangelizing. It's not about him, it's always about Jesus!

Acts 14:19-28 *"19. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.
20. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.
21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,
22. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.
23. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.
24. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.
25. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:
26. And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.
27. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.
28. And there they abode long time with the disciples."*

Dealing with pressure situations and growing spiritually through faith applied in the Holy Spirit's power was the "norm" for the apostles and their expectation for all the new believers. We believe that this remains the Lord's expectation for us all. We are to grow in the "grace and the knowledge of the Lord", **2 Peter 3:18**, and be ready to follow our Lord into any situation he calls us to walk through with his hand holding ours. At times it is only the awareness of His presence in the darkness that keeps us sane.

Everywhere we walk in his plan for our life we have the filling of the Holy Spirit to comfort us and the Lord beside us for living fellowship, but it may be through fire and great darkness at times. It is His Light and His Word and Spirit that comforts us in such places. Hear Peter's and Paul's encouragement, and see and understand clearly the true nature of the "normal" Christian walk through this present world.

1 Peter 2:18-22. *"18. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.
19. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.
20. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.
21. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

22. *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*"

1 Peter 4:12-19. *"12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

13. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19. Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Romans 5:1-11. *"1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Paul's expectation was that pressure situations would be normal for the believer under satanic attack in the intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict that follows the Cross, the Empty Tomb, and Pentecost. The victory of the Cross and Empty Tomb has defeated Satan strategically, but we are urged to keep our armour on, for the defeated enemy is rage filled at his defeat and seeks to destroy any careless believer who does not go

about fully spiritually armed and filled in the Holy Spirit! As we approach the 2000th Anniversary of this eternally significant victory in 2032, A-Cs Prep-Team are busy indeed to keep every distractable person's eyes off the Lord's completed work.

We now walk a victorious battlefield in this world, and the ultimate eternal Victory is assured for the Holy Spirit filled believer, but alertness is called for each and every moment of every day, for the enemy's troops still walk about and they remain malice filled, and as they approach their date of 2030, they are increasing in that malice. Do a word study of the military command words, "alert", "stand" and see how many times believers are given "orders" that would be appropriate to troops on a battlefield, not any parade ground.

We are living still on a battlefield where the Lord Jesus Christ defeated the enemy of mankind, but where the enemy is still fighting any rear-guard action he can to maim and kill believers and rob them of eternal rewards. This present world is not a palace where we relax but remains a battlefield, where deceptive enemies are active all about us, pretending they are no threat, but they will kill the unwary and unarmed. The "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" is relaxing time and that is to come, but only after the Church is with the Lord in heaven. Revelation 19. Until then we are alert and work!

Until that eternal relaxation and celebration time we are soldiers and ambassadors of the court of heaven in enemy occupied territory, even though it is the blood-soaked ground of the Lord's victory over sin and death. Evil is yet to be removed, but we are 100% sure that it will be finally defeated and removed – but that is at the Lord's Second Advent, and until then we are his soldiers and ambassadors, and we have the mental attitude of farmers and athletes.

So let us stand to attention – as the soldiers of the Lord and let us hear his "Daily Orders" for the Church Age and be obedient to his commands to us. We prove our love by following his orders, not ignoring them, for then we will be deceived by the agents of the enemy who have infiltrated the churches. As we have seen above a number of times - Satan has always put his best, that is, his most dangerous people into the churches where they can do the most damage.

John 15:14, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Paul certainly experienced all that the Lord warned us all of – false brethren were actually trying to kill Paul at times. We may not face that level of pressure, but we do face the daily assault on the stability of our mind and heart, so let us garrison our soul and spirit through the Word.

CHURCH AGE "DAILY ORDERS" FOR ALL BELIEVERS (From Beginning to End)

Ephesians 6:10-18. *"10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

11. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

13. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

James 4:7-10. *"7. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

1 Peter 5:6-10. *"6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*

7. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9. Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

11. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

James 1:12-19, 26-27. *"12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

16. *Do not err, my beloved brethren.*
17. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*
18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*
19. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:*
26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*
27. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

James is very blunt about the reality of pressure, the "normal" nature of trouble and temptation, and the need to stand against it without blaming anyone else, and then he warns us to be wary of the great dangers coming from rich and powerful people (we now speak of the "global elite" as part of the A-C Prep Team) who will abuse the saints, and the danger of the saints being deceived by riches, as Demas was finally, preferring the temporary ease of this world to eternal rewards in the next. **2 Timothy 4:10.**

- James 5:1-6, 10-11.** *"1. Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.*
2. *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.*
 3. *Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*
 4. *Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.*
 5. *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.*
 6. *Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.*
 10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*
 11. *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."*

Paul speaks also of "deceitful lusts", **Ephesians 4:22**, whereby believers are conned into following after things that do not matter and ignoring the eternal things that will actually bring glory to the Lord Jesus. The majority are sadly fools deceived by the devious! He speaks confidently of our victory in Christ Jesus, and he assures the Roman Church that they can never be separated from the Love and Power of the Lord Jesus Christ even though they will most certainly go through great pressure situations and many may give their lives for the Lord.

Romans 8:35-39. *"35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

36. *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*
 37. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*
 38. *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*
 39. *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Romans 12:10-15. *"10. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;
13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.
14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Many within this church at Rome suffered and died in the persecution of Nero in 65-67 AD, including Peter and his wife, and Paul. The author of Hebrews reminds us that we are all being cheered on from the stands of eternity by all the great saints of the past, who watch with interest our struggles and triumphs as we battle our way through the angelic conflict. In a battlefield who isn't fighting? The answer is of course = the coward, and the one who stays out of the fighting for other reasons than cowardice, like laziness or lusts.

What are we to make of people who speak of and seek after wealth and power now as their right before the sight of the saints who gave their lives for the Lord? What must the saints of the past who suffered and died for their testimony say in heaven as they watch and hear the prosperity focused believers and "make believers" of today? What are we to say in light of the multitude of believers who even today are giving their lives for the Lord in many lands and suffering great want?

Do we accuse the holy martyrs and suffering saints in persecuted lands of being sinners? Are they in error because of their present poverty and suffering? Are believers who suffer today in sin, do they lack faith, or are they just being asked to walk a harder path than us at this point, and may they possibly even win more eternal rewards than us?

Hebrews 11:32 – 12:3. *"32. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:*

33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.
34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
35. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38. (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

12:1. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”

We are on dangerous ground here if we accuse any persecuted, poor or sick believer of being in error, for Job’s counsellors were all prosperity gospel preachers and accused Job of sin, and our Almighty God condemns them all to death, and Job’s prayer for them alone saved their lives! **Job 42:7-9**. Read these verses and be warned.... The whole book of Job opposes the “prosperity gospel” message, for the preachers of all such nonsense are roundly condemned by the Lord, as being in satanic (though well-meaning in their own eyes, and sincere) error! Job’s prayer for these false brethren/theologians alone saved their lives from God’s execution of them!

God forbid that we insult the martyrs of yesterday or today – and yet this is exactly what the prosperity gospel preachers do every time they praise their own big cars, palatial homes and lavish lifestyles, and then seek more money from God’s people to pay for their expenses.

In light of this discussion what are we to expect as we face the “last days” of this present age? Sadly, it is to see more and more of these falsehoods proclaimed by deceived and deceiving men and women. The satanic nature of the “prosperity gospel” message is clear when you realise that every dollar given to these so called “ministries” is a dollar that isn’t going into a genuine ministry that is bringing glory to the Lord.

Every person deceived by this evil message is sadly a person who later walks away from the Lord feeling “let down” by the false promises of the slick preachers of what I call “cash-Christendom”, and yet they have never met the real Jesus who is with us in trouble and distress. John 16:33. Do you believe the words of the Real Jesus, or are you being swayed by the paperback fiction of false theology?

Let us tell ourselves the truth brethren and stand against this old evil in its new guise. Let us silence the false brethren like the “counsellors/persecutors of Job” who abound in our own day. We are well warned that we will have many of them about! False brethren and false prophets have always outnumbered the true in history!

2 Timothy 3:1-5, 4:1-5. *“3:1. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

2. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3. Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4. Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

4:1. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

6. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

In these last days as we see the enemy’s “Tribulation Prep-Team” so active, let us choose our company believers! Let us select the company of the genuine saints like Job and the apostles of the Lord, not these make-believer “aints”, in their white suits and patent leather shoes, who preach whatever they think will “sell” for their own benefit, and the robbery of the genuine Church. The fake preachers take money away from genuine mission, every time any saint is deceived by them, and gives to their fake program, and so robs the genuine work of legitimate support.

Let us select our company and be comfortable with the words of the apostles and stand in the apostolic faith. Jude 3. We stand with our brethren who have suffered and died for their faith down the years and lest we stand ashamed before them and our Lord we do not seek a rose covered path through this life, but we seek the Lord’s only path for us, and whatever that brings to us.

We welcome any wealth that comes for it will be provision for ministry, not funds for self-centered pleasure. We seek the blessing and abundance of the Lord’s provision for His Worship and Work, not our rest and relaxation. One great modern saint who gives millions of dollars a year to ministry said, “I have learned that the more I shovel out to

the Lord, the more the Lord shovels back into my businesses, and the Lord always has a bigger shovel than me". If we are prospered, as this man is in the Lord, it is to pour blessing to the glory of Jesus, not buy another new half million-dollar car to add to our garage full of classic cars!

We stand as the Lord's soldiers, fully armed and filled with the Holy Spirit ready to worship, serve and minister to the saints, and we look to heaven for our provisions and our ever-lasting rewards. We stand with Paul, not the fakes of the money-making satanic circus. Hear Jesus words from Matthew 7, "few there be that find it (the true path)".

REAPING AND SOWING

The preachers of the "prosperity gospel" will often quote from selected passages and draw "principles" from them but beware that the texts they quote are not taken out of their context, and so do not actually teach something significantly different to the things these men and women are arguing.

Their favourite texts are **Malachi 3:8-10**, and **2 Corinthians 9:6**. They are representative of the others they will use, and so I will address them briefly here to underline the message that we have already seen above. The key background message of all the Scriptures, Old Testament and New Testament, is that **God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others**, and that the "blessing" may be material for some, but it may not, but whatever the Lord blesses us with, it is never for self-centered enjoyment, but to pour out blessing to others to the glory of the Lord Jesus name and the uplifting of his Church.

Let us examine the principles of Malachi chapter 3. The first thing to notice about this chapter is it speaks of the Coming of the Lord to Israel as their Messiah. It speaks of the first messenger who announces the Lord (John the Baptist – Elijah figure) and the prophetic word given here in 450-399 BC was fulfilled 100% in the Lord's first Advent 29-32 AD.

It is a strong condemnation of the hypocrisy in the days of Malachi, and right through to the days when the Lord himself will come. Pharisaic hypocrisy was a major target for the Lord's attention in his First Advent. The Lord told many parables relating to money and giving, and challenged religious and legalistic hypocrisy in every way. These challenges remain relevant to us and the two Biblical Doctrines relating to GIVING are below set out by points to follow this up, for we are all challenged to "give as unto the Lord", and do so until He returns, or we join him through the door of death.

The "tithe" was not just a ten-percentage gift, it was actually the "income tax" for the temple upkeep in ancient Israel. In the Doctrinal summaries listed below it is spelled out more fully, but the annual tithe, depending on the specific year in the agricultural cycle,

could be a ten-percentage payment, or up to 23.3% in some years, including a gift for the “poor of the land” also. “Free will offerings” were always **on top of** the basic 10 - 23.3 % “tithe”.

The problem in Malachi’s day is that the people were lying about their annual returns from agricultural/business profits and so were “robbing” the temple and the Levites of the needed funds to keep the temple sacrifices operating. The temple and the sacrifices spoke of the coming Messiah, and so it was vital that they operated properly as they prepared for his arrival and spoke of His person and His work!

To fail to fulfil their obligation to support the Levites, the Temple, and the poor of the land, was to “rob God” of the witness to the coming Messiah and to show contempt for the Mosaic Law and the Lord’s plan for Israel as the “light bearer nation” before the gentiles. It was a serious insult to God, just as believers today failing to support the local church, and its work, and their pastor, and yet expect the church to “be there for them”.

The key issue is what is to be our mental attitude as we give? Do we give in grace and gratitude, in joy at what the Lord has poured out upon us, or do we calculate our giving to the percentage point and give “what is required”? Paul speaks about this, following up the many parables of the Lord, in 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9, and these chapters are referred to below in the two doctrinal studies.

It is our ministry’s position that we give in grace and gratitude, not in legalistic calculation of what is the “correct amount”. We believe that church age believers, following the parables the Lord told, and the teaching of the apostles, give abundantly, as the Lord has prospered us and we are able to give, and that giving may be in time, talents, spiritual gifting, goods or money. Malachi’s people had a strict calculation to stick to, to support temple, Levites and the poor, and they were robbing God by not meeting that requirement, but they are being challenged to give far more as a free will offering also on top of any obligatory tithes.

The issue for Malachi, and as the Lord’s prophet, the issue for the Lord, is that their slack giving of the tithe is a reflection of their slackness in love towards the Lord their God. They need to return to the right level of love towards the Lord first, well before they re-open their wallets. (Verse 7 – Revelation 3:19-22.) Malachi will go on to describe the sort of life-style of the “lover of the Lord” who will be speaking often of the Lord, not just calculating their offering! **Malachi 3:16-18**.

The issue is not that the Lord will “double their investment” with him in giving. The issue is that if they get their love for the Lord right, then they will meet their obligations towards his holy temple and the Levites who run it, and they will support the poor! As James identifies, building on the Lord’s words, recorded in Matthew chapters 6 and 25, if we get our heart right towards the Lord, we will have all else right. That means we will give to the Lord’s work, and we will support our poorer brethren! **James 1:22 – 2:26**.

That means, as Paul notes in 2 Corinthians 8-9, that we will pour with joy all we are able to give towards the Lord's work. As the Lord has prospered, we are to give. That means we will not try to give when we actually need to receive, as we have no money, but even if we have no money at this point, we will still give, but it will be our time, energy, work, or some other thing. Whatever we give it will be given with joy not with any expectation of getting back, and we will give without a calculator in our hands.

The Lord will meet our needs so that we can meet the needs of the churches, but note here, it is the meeting of needs not the meeting of lusts or "wants". We give freely and with joy, and we must be ready to receive if we have need to at times, without embarrassment, if we face the famines that this world brings at times.

The false prosperity gospel preachers miss the obvious here, that we are to support each other, for good and spiritual brethren are at times "poor" and will need our help and we may need theirs at some point. The Jerusalem Church helped the others early on but later needed help to deal with a famine there. They were not spiritual in wealth and carnal when they needed help – they were spiritual both times, and so were the others who received help from them, and then later helped them. The believer needs to be ready to "abound" and "be abased", and that means we are to be ready to receive gifts from others and then give gifts as we are able later.

Philippians 4:9-13. *"9. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

Any prosperity we have here is to "pour out" to the glory of the Lord, and any need we have is to be poured out before the Lord, 1 Peter 5:5-10, knowing that He will meet our needs in accordance with the riches that are in our relationship with Christ Jesus. Romans 9:23, Ephesians 2:2-8, Philippians 4:19.

We are to be relaxed about wealth and goods, seeing them as mere "details of this present life", and be ready to give them away to assist the Lord's work and people, and ready to receive them from others when we have need. "Things" we temporarily "own" here on earth are no indication of spirituality, they are just "details of this life", each to be used or received, to do the work we are called to do on our walk through this very short life. Spirituality is walking in the Holy Spirit, not a matter of material or financial wealth, or the lack of it!

Let us stand with the apostles ready to pour ourselves out to the glory of God and the blessing of our brethren and let us stand against those who wish to make the churches into money making rackets to feed their own and other's lusts. Even if the majority of churches teach this evil nonsense we will stand with the Lord and the Apostles in the biblical faith; and we urge you to join us in holding to truth on the "narrow way" with Jesus, not the "broad way" of this fake movement that leads only to destruction for all deceived by its satanic message.

We are here for the glory of the Lord Jesus – and so let us use all we have for His Glory and seek any way we can find to assist his saints, our brethren that all that blesses us might be a blessing to others. We are called to "Servant Leadership" not earthly prosperity and power or fame. Let us walk the narrow path with our Lord, and rejoice in His joy and love.

Notes

THE LAST WORDS OF THE APOSTLES ABOUT THE DANGERS OF THE LAST DAYS OF THE CHURCH

Let's end our study by opening the door to the "Last Words" of the Apostles and just look at two chapters here (I leave you to follow up with enthusiastic study each of the Pastoral Letters from the "Last-Words" section of the website – where you have the full Bibliography and can search out good biblical commentators from there).

2 Timothy Chapter 3

Verses 1 - 5

" This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Background And Analysis

As believers we must be able to see where we are in history and act in the most appropriate manner to the challenges we face. Being correctly related to history is what this section underlines. We are, Paul says, in the "last days", and we must be clear what that means for our mission and life generally. Since Pentecost this is the intensified stage of the angelic conflict, for Satan is defeated and he knows his time is limited, and his malice is great, for he has been fooled by Spirit Filled believers, who he underestimated.

He thought he could out-think Jesus and work his evil to kill him before the cross, but he failed, and he has failed since, due to both his own evil crew's arrogance and to good people walking in the Spirit, but more he failed because he didn't remember that God is God, and he is just a creature! That same weakness is a characteristic of Satan's present "Prep-Team" that is so active in trying to deceive the world today. They don't believe that the Spirit-Filled Believer is superior to them, **1 John 4:4**, but we are, Praise God!

Paul could say to Timothy, "you know", and he did, but very few today are correctly related to history; too many do not know their place in this space-time universe and do not obey the Lord's commands for these days. To know history and one's place in it is to be safe in the midst of trouble, but to not know what is happening is to be in constant danger.

As the old commentator Lock observes, "there is still here the contrast between empty talk and real work". We can only do the real work of God if we know where we are in his plan, and what is required of us in this age, and at our exact place in the plan. We must be correctly oriented to our place in space-time, and so play our part fully, God's way.

The last days are upon us, Paul says, and we must live in accordance with what that means. What are these last days? They were ushered in at the Lord's death, resurrection and ascension and the Day of Pentecost; the last period of world history before the second advent began with the Lord's victory over sin and death, and its author, Satan. He now knows the time is very limited and as he closes in on the time for the Tribulation period he is apparently "going seriously nuts" and we see this in his team's work in today's world.

Since the birth of this new age believers have been living in an intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict, when Satan is doing all he can to destroy the message of hope and the messengers who are true to it. Given the pressure that will be consistently upon us as believers we are to maintain to line of separation between ourselves and the pagan world, so that the visible difference will enhance the gospel message. Post-Covid we see the enemy forces intensifying their work in real and obvious preparation work for the Anti-Christ's work.

Within these last days there will be terrible times, and various passages in Paul's and John's work make it clear that the days will grow darker as we approach the end. Paul is not saying that they will be "uniformly, continuously evil, but that they will include perilous times". (John Stott).

These words are a constant reminder to never fall into the error of the so called "New Age" movement of the church, the Post Millennial theology, which looks forward to more and more good times and success in the gospel message so that the whole world will be saved in the end. Paul presents no such vision here and nor do Peter, John and Jude.

"The church is admonished to bear in mind that however they may succeed with particular persons in repressing incipient disorders....there was to be a great development of evil in the approaching future, not only in the outlying world but also in the Christian church". (A R D Fairburn).

As the Lord had portrayed in the parables of the wheat and tares (**Matthew 13:25-40**), and the wise and foolish virgins (**Matthew 25:1-13**), just so the church and world would become a mixed multitude in which the spiritual ones would face a real battle to hold their position, against Apostasy. Our Lord's point and Paul's here is the same, we must be alert to maintain our position, place, and role, as wise and productive servants of the Lord.

In verses two through nine we see, "the evil men of the days of stress described" (Stott). These are the ones the early church faced and we will continue to face, so this section could be called, "know your enemy"!

The first thing that Paul identifies is that evil is associated, and begins with, what he calls the "love of self". He will use two perfect tenses, one in the list below and the other after it, and that way emphasizes two hallmark characteristics of evil for us to reflect upon further.

W Lock observes, "the main thing is that love of self will lead to neglect of the duty to others and to God, nay more, to active wrong doing to them". As Wilson identifies, it ties in with the love of money that Paul had identified as a key problem of carnal man in **1 Timothy 6:10**. "It is moral corruption...which seeks self gratification through the things that money can buy".

There is a strong point being made by Paul and by other Apostles, and it is that there are two camps in this temporary space-time world, and they continue for eternity, and the values, desires, and goals of each differ as far as light is from darkness. We face a daily choice as to where we stand on the ultimate values of life, and whether we follow our Lord in all things or end up compromised with the world and following those who stand with the apostates.

Let us look at each of the eighteen characteristics of what we used to call "the apostates" but now see as "Satan's Prep-team", and check ourselves out in accordance with scripture: **2 Corinthians 13:5**. Let us also compare these to the characteristics of the true pastor-Teacher in **1 Timothy 3:2ff**.

1. Lovers of self. - To be self centered means that everything is interpreted in terms of selfish concerns; it is a moral relativism that centres on the self rather than God or others.
2. Covetous. - Lovers of money so that everything has a price and what is of value is what can be measured in dollar terms.
3. Boasters. - We would say people like this are "full of hot air"; they have no substance nor heart but love to speak great words about themselves. This is a perfect tense – indicating strongly the permanent results of being full of hot air rather than God's truth.
4. Pride. - Arrogance knows no bounds when the opinion of God is ignored and the self is the sole criteria for decision making.
5. Blasphemers. - When people think they know better than God they very quickly move on to directly insult God and his words, for they don't think they are bound by the rules that govern those who are, in their eyes, foolish enough to believe in God!

6. Disobedient to parents. - At heart a nation's strength is rooted in the strength and respect within the family unit. Where children grow up to despise, disobey, or ignore their parents they will grow up without a healthy sense of discipline. The society will then suffer as the child who does not respect its own parents will not often respect the life or property of others. This point applies equally to children and parents; parents must live so as to be worthy of respect and children must respect as far as they are able their parents.
7. Unthankful. - This term sums up a trait of people who are in evil that often baffles others. Why is it that you can do wonderful things for some people and they will despise you and insult you for the good you have done them, or they will use your very kindness against you? The answer is here. People who get into evil and false doctrine will lose all perspective and have as their character trait an ungratefulness that is destructive and nasty.
8. Unholy. - Holiness means to be set apart for God and his service, and unholiness means the reverse; to be set apart for self and evil rather than God. To be active in the service of the enemy.
9. Without natural affection. - No capacity for love is an indication of deeper and more dangerous aspects of a person's nature. When people love only themselves; they are incapable of truly loving others.
10. Trucebreakers. - When people have morality that is rooted in self-interest you can be sure of only one thing with them; that you cannot be sure of them at all. They will be as stable as the wind is! These are people whose word you cannot trust.
11. False accusers. - Malicious gossips will abound where-ever self is king. If people will not talk about the Lord and his word to them, they will talk about everything and anything else, as if it were important.
12. Incontinent. - No self-control. People who follow their whims and fancies as if they were truth and righteousness, where-as they are simply lust and desires.
13. Fierce. - Brutal men are Satan's men. Gentle men are God's. There is no place in the church for those who will tear another person apart with their words or their hands. We are not to be fierce like wild dogs, but gentle like our Lord. A fierce man is a false brother – a theological fraudster who is not a genuine believer at all.
14. Despisers of them that are good. - A man is known by his company and by those he loves. No good man will despise good men, but every evil man will. Look at the company others keep and see where their hearts are.

15. Traitors. - If a person is dishonourable, they will betray you without thought. Evil has no standards other than self-gratification, and betrayal of the good for temporary gain is to be expected from evil men.
16. Heady. - Thoughtlessness is another trait of evil men. They do not think about consequences, they are rash and foolish, lacking foresight and concern for others.
17. High-minded. - While being rash and foolish themselves, they use such terms of others. They do not see any problems with their own behaviours, they are perfect in their own eyes. Satan's sin of pride.
18. Pleasure lovers. - Their God is their belly. Philippians 3:19. They do things to feel good rather than because they are good, and will be of benefit for them and others

This terrible list is all too common in our day, as it was in Paul's day. It is just another sign of the impact of evil upon the person who follows the satanic worldliness viewpoint long enough. We must set our hearts and minds firmly against this way of living, that leads to such evils. In the fifth verse Paul identifies the central point about the apostates, for we must remember that these people were in the church, and they are now claiming to be more spiritual than the genuine believers.

Remember John's words in Revelation that notes that the religions of mankind will be united by the Anti-Christ and used by him for three and one half years before he wipes them out. They are deceived people and he will destroy them, but before that moment they serve him and are dangerous now! The big issue is the issue of power; the enemy's people have the power and the life style that comes from the self and the satanic, but we are to have the power and life that comes from God.

Satan's objective is not to make people into the town drunk; his real coup is to make them into self righteous legalistic hypocrites who lead churches, for then they can destroy many. They have no real power except what pride can produce, and it produces the above list rather than the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 6. The second perfect tense in this passage occurs here, as these people deny the power of God, but amplify the deceptive illusion of their own. They show their capture by Satan, the father of lies and arrogance, and it is fatal arrogance, for its consequences go on forever, unless humility breaks through. Being "high-minded" they "deny" truth, for they prefer the lies of the enemy to the truth of a demanding Creator-Saviour-King – and God is demanding!

Hendricksen notes, "these people lack spiritual dynamite. They have no love for God, nor for his revelation in Jesus Christ, nor for his people. Hence, since they are not spirit filled men, it is not surprising that they lack power". They are great pretenders, phony, and empty of both power and hope. In **Jude 12** they are referred to as, "clouds without

rain", promising much to a hungry land but delivering nothing of value nor meeting any real need.

Many in the world want a religion that does not require effort, commitment, obedience, nor any change to sinful life patterns, nor anything that would disturb the Old Sin Nature. Genuine Christianity is not their choice, but counterfeit faith is. They deny genuine spiritual power and easily and quickly accept fake alternatives to real spirituality.

Robert Mounce is scathing but accurate when he says, "people want a religion that requires nothing and changes nothing. A bit of rustic tradition totally inoffensive to anyone. Keep away from people like that, is Paul's advice to Timothy". There are the confused believers spreading falsehood in ignorance, and we are to correct if possible, but if they persist separate from them. The door is open for them to repent and be accepted back. They are not in view here; these are the wolves in sheepskins! These are fake/false/make-believers. They are enemy troops – Satan's "Pre-Trib-Prep-Team"!

Paul is strong in his command to avoid such proven false "brothers" for they are not brethren at all – they are enemy soldiers dressed as our own, but their hearts and minds belong to Satan. Timothy is to keep on turning away from any who are like this. At any point where such people are identified they are to be rejected and avoided, and this would appear to involve both the public and church social life, and in private life. Such people are to be seen as "anathema", **1 Corinthians 16:22**, and are to be fled from as if they have the plague! Above he has urged the truth preached to convict them of their evil, but once it is clear the truth is hated, their real family is identified/unmasked, and they are to be separated from.

Let us all join with Harry Ironside in his heart felt prayer. "God give us to be genuine, to be real, that eternal things may so grip our souls that we will live and do the work and be real witnesses for him".

We have seen many times in this letter, as in all Paul's work, that the believer is urged to be constantly on guard against the false brother, and to be discerning of the words and behaviours of others so that he/she is not fooled by evil in any possible disguise. Are we alert enough, or do we forget to beware of evil men and heed the warnings our Lord gave us? Are we too polite to evil fakes? Do we proclaim truth as the Lord and Apostles did?

To be ready for the perilous times we may be about to face we need firm knowledge of the policy and stable application of the power of God in our lives. The only way to be ready for trouble is to walk in the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no other way to survive and prosper spiritually in this stage of the Angelic Conflict. The pastor must be alert also both to the danger of the false teacher and the time wasting danger of giving them time of day over any matter. These people are not to be debated, socialized with, or greeted in the street, they are to be avoided at all costs! **2 John 9-11.**

The truth must be taught, and those who reject it identified and avoided so that their poisonous words and lives infect as few people as possible.

Paraphrase

"Be really clear about this fact, that in the days we live in there will be times of great peril and trouble for the genuine believer. The reason for this is that men who reject the truth will set themselves up as the standard and their self love will lead to all other evils. They will be proud, arrogant, lovers of money and what it can buy. They will be self-centered boasters, looking down on others as if they are superior to all, slandering God and his people, rejecting the truth, ungrateful for things they have received, rejecting God's claim upon their lives, with no natural affection towards people they should have love for. They will be people whose word cannot be trusted, and who then accuse others of evil with vicious gossip being their standard way of dealing with others who they cannot understand.

They have no self-control, but are fierce like wild animals instead of creatures made in God's image, hating good men and acting in a rash and thoughtless way in matters that they should be thinking about what is right before acting. They are full of their own importance and love their own pleasure ahead of anything else, believing that pleasure is always "good", even when God has set limits and boundaries for pleasure to operate in. They always know better than God! They sometimes have a religious facade to their lives, they appear to be spiritual at times, yet they are denying real spiritual power through their life pattern. From such people turn away, at every time and in every place you see them avoid them like the plague."

DOCTRINES TO REFLECT UPON

APOSTASY

1. Apostasy means falling away from truth – it is the philosophical position of “A-C’s Preparation Team” – they have studied the Bible but fallen far away from it.
2. Apostasy differs from backsliding of a true Christian. A true Christian can backslide, an apostate is never born again, e.g. Judas Iscariot.
3. The backslidden Christian loses his fellowship, but not his salvation as this is a free gift of God (John 5:24, Titus 3:5).
4. The apostate is declared in (2 Timothy 4:3, 4) and (1 John 2:19).

5. Apostates may do good works calling themselves Christians, but they should not be accepted as such. (2 John 9-11, John 10:12, 13) This is human good.
6. There will be a great apostasy prior to the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

ANGELIC CONFLICT [Above]

Notes

2 Timothy 3:6-9

" For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men as theirs also was."

Background And Analysis

Paul builds on the list of evils he has already given us to assist identification of these false/fake brothers (enemy agents masquerading as genuine believers). Here he notes the historic examples of Jannes and Jambres, who Jewish tradition records were the names of the magicians who acted for Satan and against God when Moses was in the court of Pharaoh. Exodus 7:10-12. These two evil men are the "type" of people we must be alert for. They were well dressed, famous in their day, powerful through demon-possession and respected as "experts" by the majority, yet they were demon-possessed!

The picture Paul draws here is not flattering for the evil ones; they are portrayed as vile and slimy "worms" who will stoop to anything to achieve their self-centered goals. Let us learn from Paul here when describing Satan's present "team members" for we are often too polite with them and about them. The consistent picture of "end times" passages indicate evil getting worse towards the end, and the two perfect tenses above remind us of the eternal consequences of being "laden" with evils and so "corrupted" in all thinking and behaviours, and the results are indeed forever, unless this path is rejected.

The verb translated "creep" is one that indicates the character and purpose of the false teachers. They are like thieves, and the analogy is a close one for they try to steal the stability and joy of all they target. They act like thieves and actually "target" those who are potentially weak and vulnerable through lack of biblical teaching. Remember these are enemy agents, not confused believers here. Like their master Satan they are good at targeting vulnerable people, and guilt is the best hook that Satan has in any life. Unconfessed sin festers within and provides a hook for further evil. God's Word is good news from Old Testament to New, but Satan's team uses guilt. **Psalm 103:8-17.**

The term for "silly women" is a disparaging one and Paul makes no apology for it. It refers to women (but is an inclusive term and can refer to men also) who are so emotionally unstable and vulnerable, through earlier unconfessed sins, that they will allow themselves to be fooled by cunning and calculating men. While our early experiences make us vulnerable, when we come of age, we are responsible and culpable if we remain vulnerable, for we are well able in the Holy Spirit's power, and through application of biblical doctrine, to deal with the legacy of our traumatized past (if we have had one – and I speak from experience here with great traumas in my past). If we fail to act to remove our vulnerability, we are responsible for consequent poor choices, and rightly judged.

No Christian woman, or man, should ever be in this category, and none need be if they hear, believe, and apply the doctrines of the Word Of God. Many of us have had multiple traumas in our childhoods, but if we add addictive behaviours to cope rather than confession and spiritual growth, we open up more vulnerability and evil will find its home within. If we fail to believe and apply the Word of God, we will in the end believe anything, and the result will be we are "used" by those who are the religious "con men" of society.

All who are conned by Satan's present team are responsible, for they have not taken the precautions that Paul has urged. Only the foolish are fooled. We are on a battlefield here in space-time and those who walk carelessly cannot blame others for being hit/hurt – it is a battlefield after all. We are warned by the Word! We believe truth or are fooled by the con-artists of "A-C's Christendom" bull artists! I am being rude believer – these people are after the soul and life of the foolish – we are to preach truth, so none are with any excuse for their stupidity if it continues.

The concept of money hunger on the part of the false teachers is clear also from the word for "captive". It is a military word that means to take a prisoner of war and then use them for money when sold as a slave. We are reminded by this word of two other concepts, one of the Angelic Conflict (also called the "Invisible War" by some), and the other the deliberate nature of Satan's targeting of those who are not walking as they should, and so are spiritually weak.

Peter warns of this very tactic by using the lion analogy for Satanic attack. **1 Peter 5:8-9.** Lions target the animal they wish to kill very carefully. They pick the weak, the sick

and old, and the animal that is isolated from the rest of the herd. Any believer that is sick or weak spiritually is so because of failure to apply the Word to life, and they are isolated because they have got away from supportive, encouraging fellowship with their brethren in the Lord.

The things that make us even more vulnerable are spelt out in these verses. There are three characteristics of spiritual weakness mentioned here that psychologically are the warning signs of danger for time and eternity.

First issue is that they are laden (perfect tense here – lasting/eternal consequences if not dealt with) with sins. They have not been dealing with their sins on a moment-by-moment basis in accordance with Scripture, **1 John 1:9**.

The **second** issue is that they are being led away with their various lusts, rather than resisting them. Strong desires are not to be heeded; they are to be discerned! If a desire is good it can be followed but if it is wrong, it is to be resisted and as James warns us, we cannot blame God if we fall due to our own lusts being given power over us. **James 1:13-15**. The enemy will always have someone or something to lead us away from the truth, he specializes in alternatives to truth! Satan “smells” our weaknesses and will always play to them, just like his servants. Con-men always target the person they feel is most likely to be fooled, and they target anyone addicted to any other “lust” type activity, and feed that lust.

The **third** characteristic of the “victim”, is that they are always learning new things yet never really gaining or growing in spiritual strength from their knowledge. What is the problem here? Is there something wrong with the Word of God or is it a problem with the hearers? They have failed to follow up belief with application.

The Bible makes it clear that the problem with genuine believers is mainly the “forgetful hearer”, **James 1:19-25, 2:18-26**. As **Hebrews 4:2** identifies the issue is that the Word has not been “mixed with faith” in the hearers, and therefore not been applied into daily life. Without application there is no full understanding and no growth. Without doctrine applied Satan’s team attacks, and the people who don’t know the Word perish.

The false teachers will be able to be depended on in one matter, they will always oppose all who stand for the truth! They keep on opposing (present active indicative) the truth. They cannot abide the truth and must oppose it at all points lest they are convicted by the message.

The two men mentioned opposed Moses and for every miracle he did they counterfeited it with satanic power. They were totally convinced of their beliefs and even when the evidence of the superiority of Moses God came through the miracles wrought, they rejected Moses and God. They didn't want to know the truth!

Paul refers to them as, “men of **corrupt** minds”. The perfect tenses again remind us of the lasting consequences of a perverted mind – they go further and further into evils.

Evil doesn't stand still, it always advances. The word for corrupt indicates that they once had knowledge of the truth and were intelligent, but had let the evil within them get hold, and the very strength of their mind became their weakness. This led to their being declared "reprobate", or rejected by the potter as a "bad pot". They are good for no purpose at all, and as they have never belonged to the Lord they will be left to the consequences of their choices, but finally they will be judged with Satan, who they have followed. God is in control and will deal with them finally, but like Moses we may be called to stand against these people, and we must be ready.

The trash can of history is full of men and women like these false teachers and evil miracle workers. God does not pay his accounts on the 20th of each month! Sometimes these evil people survive for a long time, but eventually the truth comes out and they fall, and drop from sight. Their folly is finally seen by all in eternity, and those who feed upon the Word see the truth earlier and are delivered from anything these fakes could otherwise do to them.

All believers must be ready to spot the false teachers as we have seen above, but even more than this we must all be "safe" from attack from them. We are safe when we are walking as we should, and we are in danger of being deceived when we walk away from the Lord. As the old song says, "we must trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey!" Eternal life perspective = not "loving this present world" more than loving the thought of being with the Lord and the saints in heaven.

As a pastor you may be called to stand publicly, like Moses was, against false teachers, even against those like Jannes and Jambres, men with real but evil satanic power, and so well able to do miracles of deception. **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, Matthew 7:20-23.**

Power is no proof of anything spiritual; it is simply a sign of power. It is the source of the power that is to be questioned. The same principle applies to wealth, for it alone proves nothing, but how it is obtained may give evidence for good or evil. As the Lord made clear in **Matthew 7:13-23**, it is the "fruit" in the life and doctrine of the people with the power that is the issue, for from these things you see the source of the power.

We must all be ready to stand against the evil crew of the enemy, if the truth we proclaim is being publicly opposed by them. We must be ready to face great power and deception without feeling threatened and we must by word and deed reject their position, and ensure that the Lord's policy alone is left before the people. When these people "win" against us we must not lose our perspective, but trust the Lord to judge them in his time and in his way.

Paraphrase

"The sort of false teachers I have been talking about are like thieves, who creep into houses to enslave foolish people who have not kept themselves safe. They capture these people after targeting them as "easy game". The weaknesses they spot and use

in their victims are their failure to deal with sin, their refusal to resist lust and strong desires and take control over their lives, and their refusal to take the Word in with faith and practical application to their lives. Just as Jannes and Jambres stood up against and opposed Moses, just so these sort will always oppose the truth and all who stand for it. They are often intelligent men and women, but they have given themselves over to evil and corrupted their own minds, being finally declared "useless" and "worthless" by God and judged. They will be dealt with and will advance no further, for eventually their foolishness will be clear to all just as these old magicians was in their day."

Verses 10 - 15

" But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Background And Analysis

In contrast to the false teachers, who cannot be followed without spiritual disaster for the disciple and the people of God, Paul repeats what he said several years before in **Philippians 3:15-17**, "Timothy follow me and my example, I won't let you down!" As he faces his own death, Paul draws on his own experiences with warmth and concern for his young friend and for all who will stand with him, in true doctrine, down the ages, and urges him and us to be wise not foolish, to endure, not seek easy ways out of pressure, to hold to the truth, not compromise or water it down.

As our Lord said in Matthew 7, you can test a teacher's teaching by looking at what it does for them in their life, and for all who believe them. If a man or woman has godly fruit in their life they may stand in the truth, listen to what he/she says and test their words then with scripture, but if they have no godly fruit in their lives, save yourself the effort of even checking out the words for he/she is a false teacher. (**Matthew 7:15-25, Luke 6:43-45.**)

Christianity is a very personal thing; it depends on your personal relationship with the Lord through the Holy Spirit within and your personal instructional relationship with a godly pastor teacher who leads you into the Word of God faithfully and systematically. The gift of Pastor Teacher is an important one in the local church and is meant to be the heart of each church's growth as the pastor teaches the Word and the people watch his/her life and heed his/her words and apply what they see and hear. Paul reminds Timothy of this process in these verses.

The Greek verb “parakoluthéo” is a strong one to indicate the close study of the words and life of Paul by Timothy from which he challenges to both theory and practice of the doctrines Paul communicated to him. This is the biblical way of communication of doctrine, it is always to be in, by, and through relationship with the teacher, so that there is no chance for a phony, or play actor (hypocrite), to ever get into a place where they influence others.

As the mentor of my university years at Blockhouse Bay Baptist, the late professor E M Blaiklock said, "the defeat of falsehood is best effected by the demonstration of the truth". This is best done through the life and work of the pastor. Dr Harry Ironside, ever the practical pastor, said, "we cannot lift men higher than ourselves. If one is not living for God, is not walking with Christ, then he cannot be a real blessing to other people".

The tests for the pastor are clearly stated by Paul. The eighteen characteristics of the false teachers in verses 1 - 5, are balanced out and answered by the nine characteristics of the faithful pastor. Once again, compare this passage to 1 Timothy 3 also.

1. **Doctrine.** - Paul had no secret doctrines, everything was open and clear to be checked against scripture and against his own and the Lord's life. Paul's teaching was plain speaking, and all could see and hear it and assess it systematically.
2. **Manner of life.** - This refers to the way a person lives away from the pulpit, or place of teaching. In their daily walk do they live as they should? They must if they are to properly "adorn" the gospel message they give. Titus 2:10.
3. **Purpose.** - The word prothesis has a meaning that indicates Paul had a "guiding principle" for his life and it was to glorify Christ; he lived for that and so must Timothy.
4. **Faith.** - What he believed was seen by doctrine in practice in every decision of his life. We are to be tested as Paul was; when we face a decision do we apply "faith" to it, do we seek the Lord's will and apply his word, for it is in this that we see faith applied. It is in our decision making that we really see what we believe!
5. **Long suffering.** - The strong military word for gritting it out on a long campaign is one of the key fruits of the Holy Spirit. Being "big souled" is what we are called to and the mature believer will show this trait, it comes naturally to one walking in the Holy Spirit. The "Fellowship of His Suffering". **Phil 3:10, Col 1:24-26, Jas 5:10.**

6. **Charity.** - Agape love is another fruit of the spirit that shows our status as believers and our right to speak as pastor. If we have no love we are a clanging cymbal (**1 Corinthians 13:1-13**); we have nothing of substance to offer people.
7. **Patience.** - Another fruit of the spirit which emphasizes that we are waiting on the Lord's time for things to happen rather than telling God what and when to do things. To wait on the Lord does not mean we are inactive, but that we are ready to move at all times, but seek clear guidance as to when and where. We are in no human rush, but seek God's timing.
8. **Persecutions.** - When one stands for the truth there will be those who attack you and this happened with Paul, for he stood for truth and those who preferred the lies of the enemy persecuted him. We are known by our friends and by our enemies, and Paul was proud to be on the receiving end of persecution from the enemy, it meant he was dangerous to them!
9. **Afflictions.** - To suffer for the truth in the body by persecution is one thing but the faithful pastor will often be called to suffer mentally with anguish and concerns for others in the midst of his own pressures. It is this inner torment of soul for others that is in view here, and it is the lot of all who love the Lord and his people. Paul's testimony in **2 Corinthians 11:23-33**, spells out much of the above mentioning the things that had happened to that point in his ministry. Far more pressures had happened since he wrote that letter, although it is these first trials that he refers to, very likely as it was then he met and influenced Timothy so much as a young man. These early trials were etched onto Timothy's mind as he saw what it was to be a missionary pastor first hand.

Paul has a track record of service, and his character can be seen from the things he has said and done. Compare Paul's "CV" here to the current pod-cast con-artists in Satan's team and you will be amazed at their lack of any of these character traits. Paul reminds Timothy of the early events of Antioch, Lystra and Iconium, what serious suffering he endured, and from which the Lord delivered him. Acts 13, 14. The Lord's deliverance from each persecution in a triumphant manner was the Lord's seal of approval upon Paul, and in this last trial he will face, the triumphant way he will die for the Lord will be the final seal on his ministry. **1 Peter 2:9-10, 19-21, 4:13.**

Paul was confident in his Lord, but not arrogant about his life and achievements. It is in this, as in all things, that he differs from the false teachers; they are arrogant about what they have done, whereas no true servant of the Lord can have this mental attitude, for all who serve the Lord know it is he who deserves and will get the glory, the praise and the honour for delivering us from trial, or keeping our soul in dying grace through trials.

What a challenge to us is this portrait of a pastor! As Robert Mounce observes, perhaps with too much accuracy, "If believers today are not meeting persecution it is not because the world has come to appreciate goodness. It is rather because so few believers have determined to live genuinely Christian lives". "The nearer we get to the

end the higher is the rising tide of rebellion against God", (Harry Ironside). We must be ready to face these things, and all who would enter the pastorate must be ready for this sort of life in advance of their training. "It is only for those who are both in the world and in Christ simultaneously that persecution becomes inevitable". (J Stott).

In verse twelve we have the principle of suffering spelt out, for all to see. All those who keep on striving to live (present active participle) a godly life will suffer persecution! All who seek godliness in this last time period will receive (passive voice of verb, dioko) the attacks of the enemy. Do not feel "let down" when you are attacked, cast your cares upon the Lord and obey the last orders like a good soldier in the battle-field. So, you have been wounded – it's a battlefield! Remember **Philippians 3:10**.

It is no strange thing to experience attack, for it is "normal" in a war, what is unusual and strange is for a believer to have a life without incident, trouble, pressure or threat. We are meant to be on "active service" and that means to be engaged in battle against evil and for the truth. A prosperous, spiritually unaware and unpressured believer is clearly not much threat to the enemy! Prosperity is the toughest "test" for believers.

Simpson expresses this forcefully, "a Christian curled up on a bed of sloth belies his name. He is enlisted in a holy warfare in which hard knocks will be dealt with and borne. Piety and paralysis are false concords".

Verse thirteen reminds us that there will always be evil men and women pretending to be "Christian", and they will prosper for a time at all times in history, even getting more blatant in their hypocrisy and falsehoods towards the end of the age. They will mislead and they will be misled by others themselves, but what must be our response? These evangelists of evil will keep advancing onwards supporting Satan's plan, but we must not get distracted from our part in the Lord's plan, for it alone will finally triumph.

Security for the believer is going to be determined by what is within their own mind. If they have their thinking garrisoned by the full knowledge of the doctrines of the Word, in the filling of the Holy Spirit, then they will have strength and stability. Remember **2 Timothy 1:7** again and again in this last chapter. It is the reality of our loving relationship with the Lord, and the Spirit's power working within that produces peace of mind in the presence of anguish and persecution.

Verse fourteen identifies this clearly. Timothy is to keep on (meno) continuing in his daily feeding on and applying the Word of God. It is daily learning more and more of God's Word and applying it into the fabric of life that provides the security and strength that is needed, especially when you face the enemy daily, and often see them apparently prosper! With the Word within, the believer can have God's viewpoint rather than be distracted by what is apparently happening. We know (oida – perfect tense) the truth and are set free of the temptation to believe the fake, by our security in the truth. Oida occurs twice, in both 14 and 15! Our active response to our knowledge of the truth has eternal consequences.

In time the enemy may be more powerful politically, more wealthy, more popular and more successful as the world applauds success, but it is the last assessment that matters, it is what God thinks that finally matters!

Timothy is urged to keep to the familiar “narrow path” of truth, as that is the place of testing, but also of blessing, and there is no other way to please God, for only in doctrine is there any assurance, for it alone works in the life under pressure. Timothy has utilized God's word before and trusted in its power and truth, and under the increasing pressures of the future he must continue so to do. He has a good track record too, having been surrounded by the truth since a boy and having loved it since early days.

"Note that learning is not enough. What has been learnt must be applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, so that one also becomes convinced, with a conviction that transforms life." (W Hendricksen).

It is only the Word of God applied, that is able to make a man truly wise and keep his heart and mind in the midst of troubles. The method for this is through faith, as the word is heard, believed and applied to life on a daily basis. The daily feeding on of the Word of God will not only produce salvation for the soul but also the deliverance out of, or in the midst of the troubles that will come because of the enemy.

The Bible itself will save no-one, it is only when it's truths, which speak of Christ, are taken and applied in love and obedience to him that there is power, growth and safety. As Warren Wiersbe notes, "we are not saved by believing the Bible (John 5:39), but by trusting the Christ who is revealed in the Bible". It is application of the truth into life in spiritual power that transforms our walk, not “trembling” in the truth, for the devils do that. **James 2:18-26.**

There are many challenges in this passage as in all verses of this letter. The first to address is the challenge for us all to bear "godly fruit" in our lives, so that we are both attractive witnesses, and safe on our brief journey through time. We may get persecution for what we stand for, and such may be a badge of success, but we should never be persecuted because we are obnoxious, with our lives filled with evil fruit! Leave that to A-C's Team members...

The second challenge is to look at our attitude towards evil people who prosper in life. Do we feel anger, envy or jealousy? If we do, we must examine our perspective and ensure we make any changes required to get it right!

By that we mean, getting back to the eternal life perspective, seeing things as God sees them and doing things in a godly way, so that the temporary success of the evil does not distract us or cause us any concern, for our focus is on eternal realities and God's final assessment and judgement of all mankind.

The pastor once again comes under the spotlight in these verses and rightly so. As pastors we are responsible for the health and strength of those the Lord has given us to shepherd. How well do we measure up against the nine characteristics that Paul notes here? Can we truly say to those we lead in Christ, "follow me"? If we cannot there are things we must get sorted out both in thoughts, attitudes and in daily acts. What is our track record in service? Check the CVs of "A-C's Team" members also and you will find most have never actually done any real work, just attended meetings or held positions that required nothing done, or other people did the work...

Do we see the Lord working through us with spiritual growth in those who follow and attacks from those who oppose? The importance of checking out the pastoral candidate is another point that comes from these verses. If a man does not have this testimony, he is either new in ministry, or his ministry has lacked power, and/or focus.

Our good works and acts of love towards all may win us some friends in the community but our preaching of the gospel will often not win us anything other than enemies. Beware the preacher who is uniformly praised by the godless. Ask yourself what is he praised for? We are to be "well-spoken of in the world" as moral people, but Satan's people should hate the genuine servant of the Lord. They will lie about us; we just must be sure that their lies are proven wrong.

Genuine acts of love and concern must be seen by all. Pagans should say, "I know he preaches Jesus, and I'm not interested, but I respect what he does and that he believes in God but I don't". This was the apostle James testimony; the unbelievers referred to him as "James the Just", even when rejecting his Saviour, they acknowledged his godly life. Remember however, then they murdered him in the temple while he was at prayer!

We must be women and men of "good report" in the community, and this requirement to be without moral or other sinful blemish is vital; the unbeliever must have nothing to point at in us that might rob us of witness, or insult our Saviour. Even if, like James, they murder us at prayer, let none be able to say a negative thing about our morality, or our care for others. **Job 13:15**. Though you slay me Lord, yet will I praise your Holy Name.

Once again we are confronted with the issue of fruit in our life, as believers and especially as pastors we stand for the Lord, and as such we must stand purely with no other message being given other than the pure concern for the message that will save and sanctify.

Paraphrase

" But you Timothy have walked with and closely followed my behaviours and life for a long time, you have observed my doctrines and what they did for me, my real manner of life when others would not have seen me, the real guiding principle of my life, my rest in my faith, and my strength under great pressure, how I have gritty things out for so long.

You have seen my agape love with it's deep concern for the lost, and practical care for the saints. You have observed my patient endurance under pressure, the many persecutions I suffered, the mental anguish, which happened all those years ago in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. All those things you saw me bear up under! And I could do this because the Lord delivered me within and from them all. Yes, and what happened to me was not unusual, for all who will try to keep on living a godly life will suffer attacks and persecution from the enemy! And evil men and seducers will become worse and worse, even appearing to succeed for a time, and they will deceive many but they themselves are being deceived! But for you, you continue in the things you have learnt as my Bible student, for only in the things of God can you find assurance and stability, for you know me from whom you learnt these things, and knowing Christ about whom I spoke and for whom I live. From a child you have known the holy scriptures, and it is only in them that the path to true wisdom exists, as you believe and apply the word to your life, only then you will be saved and delivered through faith which is only ever true when in Christ Jesus."

SATANIC ATTACK

1. - Pre Adamic

	Scripture	Remarks
Original Creation	Genesis 1:1	Perfection and unity.
Creation of Satan	Ezekiel 28:13-15	Created the most beautiful creature, a genius.
Fall of Satan	Isaiah 14:12-15	"I will" 5 times. Satan sets himself up as God.
1/3 of Angels follow Satan	Revelation 12:4	
God's Judgment	Matthew 25:41	Lake of fire created for Satan and his angels.
Satan appeals		Man created with a free will to show the fairness of God's judgment.

Man having been created, Satan wages war firstly to get man to sin, secondly having had a Saviour promised to attack the line of Christ, thirdly an attack on the Saviour until He completed His work, fourthly to attack the Word of God and the individual believer.

2. - Stage 1 - Innocence-Sinfulness

	Scripture	Remarks
Man created	Genesis 1:26, 27	God provides everything. One tree a test of free will.
Woman falls	Genesis 3:1-6	Through ignorance of God's Word
Man falls	1 Timothy 2:13, 14	Man chooses deliberately to go against God's provision.

Salvation promised Genesis 3:15

3. - Stage 2 - Attack on the Line of the Saviour

Object:- If Satan can prevent the Saviour being physically born he has proved that God does not keep His promise in Genesis 3:15 and is therefore not perfect.

Attack 1. Cain kills Abel (Attack on the seed of the woman)	Genesis 4:8, 9	An unbeliever kills a believer but Seth, another believer is provided for the line of Christ.
Attack 2. Infiltration of Fallen Angels. (Attack on the humanity)	Genesis 6:1-8	Infiltration until only Noah's family left as the humanity. Flood removes angel/men demons incarcerated in Tartarus (Hades)
Attack 3. Tower of Babel (Attack on nationalism)	Genesis 11:1 -7	An attempt by Satan to bring in the Millennium without God. The original U.N. God forms nations and confuses their tongues.- Tower of Babel.
Abraham promised the Saviour will be descended from him.	Genesis 12:1-3	Attack on the line of Abraham.
Attack 4. Pharaoh of Egypt.	Exodus 1:22	Using Pharaoh by ordering the slaughter of the male Jews Satan attempts to eliminate the Jews.
David promised a King descended from him will reign forever	2 Sam 7:12-16	Satan now attacks the descendants of David
Attack 5. Against the Kings of Judah	2 Kings 22:1, 2	Josiah, boy King of Judah divinely protected comes to throne at age of 8 after coup d'etat eliminates every other member of the royal line.
Attack 6. Against the Jews	Esther 3:6	Satan attempts to destroy the Jews using Haman. Haman eventually executed.
Attack 7. Against Jerusalem.	Isaiah 37:36	185,000 Assyrian troops under Sennacherib killed by God outside Jerusalem.

4. Stage 3. - Attack on the Person of Christ

Attack 1. Possible stoning of Mary	Matt 1:18-20	The nobility of Joseph defended the as yet unborn Jesus.
Attack 2. Herod the Great.	Matt 2:16-18	Satan using Herod attempts to eliminate the Christ child by murdering all the young males in Bethlehem. Joseph takes Jesus to Egypt.
Attack 3. Temptation in Wilderness	Matt 4:9	A sinner cannot redeem other sinners. Satan offers the crown (Millennium) before the cross. Jesus follows God's plan.
Attack 4. Temptation not to go to the Cross.	Matt 16:21-23	Jesus follows God's plan although the cross was obnoxious to him.
Attack 5. Attempt to stone Jesus.	John 8:59	It was prophesied that the Saviour would die on wood. Stoning would have cut across this prophecy.
Attack 6. Attempt to tempt Jesus down from the cross.	Matt 27:40	If Jesus had come down from the cross there would have been no salvation.
Attack 7. The drugged wine.	Matt 27:34	Gall was a drug which if Jesus had accepted it would have impaired his free will and there would have been no salvation.

5. Stage 4. - Attacks since the Cross

Attack 1. Against Scripture.	Attempting to get false books accepted in the canon of Scripture. Liberalism and Moderism, Humanism and Evolution.
Attack 2. Revival of Roman Empire	Under Charlemange in 800 and Charles V in 1500. Roman Catholic Church.
Attack 3. Massacre of Jews.	Hitler's final solution attempts to eliminate Jews. No Jews no Kingdom for Jesus to reign over. Inquisition, Crusades, Russian pogroms.
Attack 4. One World Government.	Revival of the Tower of Babel concept under the League of Nations and U.N.
Attack 5. Socialism.	Satan's millennium.
Attack 6. Persecution.	Nero, Reformation, Inquisition

6. Strategy of Satan at the Present Satan's strategy is divided into 3 sections.

(a) Towards unbelievers. -

To blind them regarding the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10)

(b) Towards believers.

He accuses believers. (Revelation 12-9, 10, Job 1:6-11)

He persuades the believers to ignore the will of God through disobedience (Genesis 2:17), through worry (1 Peter 5, 7-9), ignoring doctrine (1 Chronicles 21:1)

He seeks to entice the believer from the will of God. (James 4:7, 8)

He seeks to destroy the believer's focus by getting eyes on self (1 Corinthians 1:10, 11 on people (1 Corinthians 1:12) by getting eyes on things (Hebrews 13:5, 6)

To get the believer frightened of death. (Hebrews 2:14, 15)

(c) Towards the world in general.

Satan tries to deceive the nations. (Revelation 20:7-10)

Principle:- The more you know about the Word of God the more you will be able to be effective as a Christian. c/f. Jesus in Matthew 4.

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2 Timothy 3 Verses 16 - 17

" All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Background And Analysis

This is one of the most important passages in the Word of God, and we must pause here and think deeply about its significance, for here we see the Holy Spirit through the Apostle speaking of the Bible itself and the importance and purpose of all divine revelation. The absence of the verb in verse sixteen brings even more power to the

passage, "all Scripture (is) God breathed!" God's Word is vital for us! If God "breathes" out his Word it is our Number 1 focus!

In **1 Timothy 5:18**, Paul had already combined a quote from the Old Testament (**Deuteronomy 25:4**) and from the Lord (**Luke 10:7**), and referred to both as "Scripture". So here he sums the principle up and prepares the church for the new canon that will emerge from the Apostles' pens and be fully recognized by the early years of the second century.

Some think he did not have such a thing in mind. Mounce states, "by logical extension we can rightfully include the whole New Testament, although this of course was not in Paul's mind at that moment". It is clear Paul referred to all that had been written by Apostles to this point. What the Holy Spirit had moved them to write was to be taken as the same significance to what the Old Testament recorded. Rarely, I strongly disagree with Mounce here.

Lock, as with other liberal commentators, ducks for cover over this issue noting, "Wohlenberg would include any Christian writings which had become so recognized by this time (**1 Timothy 5:18**), but this is scarcely consistent with verse fifteen, graphically defining more exactly the grammata in which Timothy had been trained from childhood". What Lock intends, is to limit the application of this principle to the Old Testament only, but this is obviously not Paul's intention.

Chrysostom noted, "the whole of this is therefore divinely inspired, doubt not then, says he, namely, as to the truly divine character of scripture - in every part it is of God". (Quoted in P Fairburn).

Some liberals, like Hanson, even try to deny Paul's authorship to this point, saying, "it is hard to imagine a more un Pauline phrase than (this)". This reflects his character, not Paul's words, for they very much are Paul's! Note the works of Hansen and Lock for they are early members of the enemy's team, undermining confidence in God's Word – a common strategy of all the satanic "prep-team". I quote from some of these like Lock and Hansen, as they will speak truth at times, for all the enemy's team do, for maximum deceptive power when they later speak lies. Learn discernment brethren by reading their words and seeing the mixture of truth and error and separate them.

As our beloved brother John Stott notes, "it seems evident that Paul envisaged the possibility of a Christian supplement to the Old Testament because he could combine a quotation from **Deuteronomy 25:4**, with a saying of the Lord in **Luke 10:7**, and call them both alike scripture (**1 Timothy 5:18**)". I believe John is right – prophetically Paul sees there will be a NT.

Unlike the prevaricators, I believe that Paul was clear about his meaning; every scripture is defined as, "all writing which the Holy Spirit has been involved in", and he sees all that has been written and recognized by the churches as an authoritative record for the early church's establishment, and that involves all that now comprises the New

Testament. The principle that Paul states here applies to all the New Testament, as to the Old Testament.

The two points he makes must be both taken seriously; the words are **inspired** and are **profitable**. The basis of the profitableness of the scriptures rests in its inspired character. Other messages may be helpful but the "God breathed" words of Scripture alone are fully and completely "profitable" for spiritual growth and strength. Then they are only profitable if they are applied into life. **Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12**.

The word "inspired" means literally "God breathed", in that the Lord intended this to be poured out onto paper for men to read and grow by. Some run a mile from the concept of verbal plenary inspiration (in other words, all the very words used by the apostles as they wrote are inspired in the original languages) but this appears to be what is in view here.

Some disagree strongly, as E F Scott, who states, "it does not, as so often has been affirmed, involve a doctrine of verbal inspiration, the idea is simply that each of the sacred books has something to reveal to us of the mind of God". Such a view has major problems, as we have seen in the introduction to these books, for it means that the men who criticize decide, in their arrogant great wisdom, which parts are "inspired" and which are not! Once again we see the enemy's approach clearly with these unbelieving men like Scott, for they want a relative standard, where each person decides what they want and what they don't! 2 Peter 1:20.

Paul's view is I still believe clear; there is growth in no other way other than the application of the living Word of God, through the Holy Spirit to daily life. I sit with the doubters on this issue and after 40+ years of study of this Letter I am more sure than I have ever been that Paul's view is to challenge us to see all before us in the Bible now as "Scripture".

As a true brother Warren Wiersbe notes, "the Word of God furnishes and equips the believer so that he can live a life that pleases God, and do the work that God wants him to do. The better we know the word the better we are able to live and work for God". The internal evidence of the books of the Bible has a power of itself as Hendricksen notes, "the sixty six books, by their very contents, immediately attest themselves to the hearts of all spirit filled men as being the living oracle of God".

As the doctrine of Inspiration makes clear, not every statement the Bible makes is true! The Bible records Satan's lies, and other men's lies, and they are truly recorded, but as lies! Wiersbe explains, "whatever the Bible says about itself, man, God, life, death, history, science, and every other subject is true. This does not mean that every statement in the Bible is true, because the Bible records the lies of men and Satan, but the record is true".

Only what God intended to be in the final canon of scripture was allowed to be admitted to it. The whole process of the formation of the New Testament was a testimony to the

grace and wonder of God's over-ruling hand over the affairs of man. Church history is an amazing record of how all that sinful men could do did not stop the Lord ensuring that the books that had the divine seal upon them ended up forming the New Testament as we now hold it.

The four roles of the Scripture are spelt out in verse sixteen; these explain how the word is profitable to us as believers.

1. **Doctrine.** - The primary purpose of the Word of God is to teach us God's policy on all matters that it comments upon. These are systematic truths that form a framework of belief to stabilize our spiritual and earthly lives.
2. **Reproof.** - The importance of God's policy is that it provides correction to error and refutes all false teaching that Satan has been trying to preach since the beginning of the age. Openness to correction = apostolic faith.
3. **Correction.** - Not only intended to convict the evil man who preaches error, the Word also is intended to assist setting straight those who have in foolishness or ignorance fallen away from the true way.
4. **Instruction in righteousness.** - The Bible contains systematic doctrinal teaching about all subjects and when taught by the prepared pastor becomes a tool for disciplined training for the believer that they might fully know and apply the will of God to their life.

The result of these things will be that the believer will be:

1. **Perfect/Completely Mentally Ready.** - This word (Greek, *artois*) was used to describe the fully trained Roman soldier, tough and ready for all campaigns in all weathers and strong in mind and body against all enemies. The full knowledge of the Word of God should render the believer capable of meeting all challenges that the world, the flesh or the devil can throw at them.
2. **Thoroughly Furnished.** - The first concept is of internal preparedness while this refers to external preparedness, that the soldier has a full and complete kit which readies him for all conditions. Perfect tense of the Greek verb reminds us that God's provision is perfect and complete for us now and forever. Whatever we face, the believer has what they need to deal with it, if we know and apply the doctrines of the Word of God.

Do you know the Word of God as a soldier knows their drill manual? Are you able to find a passage in the Bible that applies to your present situation, or do you stand in a place of confusion not aware of God's policy? These verses make two vital points for us all.

1. God's Holy Word has the doctrines within it to assist us in all situations, to help us face every test of life in a way that honours God and maintains our position as his children. We are to see it as "God Breathed".
2. If we are not prepared for a crisis, or if we fail to meet a challenge in a triumphant way it is only because we have failed to prepare by study of the Word, or failed to apply the Word to our experience.

Either way, we are responsible for our failure. Paul makes it clear that the Lord has done all he needs to do, we have the Word, and we have the Holy Spirit to assist us learn and apply, if we fail it is because we choose to live in ignorance rather than apply God's truth.

We are meant to be prepared, like the Roman soldier, for all things that the enemy might throw at us. If we are not it is because we have been disobedient and refused to hear, believe and apply the doctrines of the Word of God.

We are to be ready for battle and all that goes with battle. Toughness and robustness is called for, and it will be the result of spiritual growth that is genuine. When believers are neither tough nor robust they have not been growing God's way, in fact, they have not been spiritually growing at all, they have been fooling themselves and others!

The good works we are to produce are the works of righteousness that the spirit can produce as we apply the Word in each and every situation of daily life. As James identifies in his letter we are to be productive in time and for eternity, and that means to do what God requires of us in all situations. Faith is either real, or it is fake! Again = **James 2:18-26.**

As Pastors we are called to have a high view of the Word of God and to both uphold it and preach it thoroughly and faithfully; it alone is the training manual for believers, and we as pastors are to be the personal and corporate trainers for the believers in the church.

The Bible alone is to be the textbook for growth, and the closer we get to it for our ministerial training the more powerful will be our ministries. Upholding the truth of the doctrine of inspiration is a major issue for all who teach the Word.

Those who compromise on this will deviate on important doctrines, and that lead only to weak and ineffectual believers who are not prepared for the rigours of the Invisible War (Angelic Conflict) against Satan.

We are called to battle, and to fight safely we must be fully trained and fully equipped, and that is only possible when we hear the whole Word taught by one who believes it and is passionately committed to it and to what the Holy Spirit will do with it in the believers life. God has provided the Word – we are to take it fully and so be fully prepared for life!

Paraphrase

"All Scripture is God breathed and it is of supreme profit and value to all who feed upon it for systematic information, for convicting of error, for correcting those who fall away, for instructing us in God's perfect standard of righteousness, in order that the believer might be completely trained for battle, and thoroughly and completely equipped for all they might face in the Invisible War, ready at all times to produce works of genuine goodness in their lives."

Doctrines the Enemy's Team Hates

BIBLE: INSPIRATION

1. The principle of inspiration is found in (2 Timothy 3:16) "All Scripture is God breathed" - Gk. THEO PNEUSTOS.

The Holy Spirit communicated to the human authors God's complete plan (2 Samuel 23:2, 3, Isaiah 59:21, Jeremiah 1:9, Matthew 22:42, 43, Mark 12:36, Acts 4:24, 25, 28:25).

The human authors of Scripture so wrote that in spite of their personalities, they were able to communicate God's plan with perfect accuracy in the language they wrote.

2. The origin of Scripture is beyond human viewpoint (2 Peter 1:20, 21).
3. The Bible is the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Therefore it is the absolute standard for believers (Psalm 138:2).
4. Pre-canon revelation from God occurred through the Holy Spirit. There was no written scripture until the time of Moses (2 Samuel 23:2, Ezekiel 2:2, 8:3, 11:1, 24, Micah 3:8, Hebrews 3:7).
5. Four categories of Old Testament revelation:
 - a) The spoken word - thus saith the Lord (Isaiah 6:9, 10, Acts 28:25).
 - b) Dreams (Numbers 12:6, Genesis 15:12, 31:10-13, 31:24, Daniel 10:9) - whilst asleep.
 - c) Visions (Isaiah 1:1, 6:1, 1 Kings 22:19) - whilst awake.
 - d) Angelic teaching (Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19, Psalm 68:17).

6. The extent of revelation:

- a) The unknown past - the Bible portrays past historical details unknown to man apart from revelation (Genesis chapters 1-11). The accuracy of these historical facts is guaranteed by inspiration, e.g. Creation, Noah's Flood.
- b) Ancient history - whilst the Bible is not a text book of history, all historical citations are accurate.
- c) Objective law - the Old Testament contains many laws for both individuals and national life. These laws express perfectly the mind of God to those people to whom they are addressed.
- d) Some portions of the Bible contain direct quotations from God. The doctrine of inspiration guarantees that such quotations are properly recorded exactly as God desired.
- e) God uses the emotions, trials and triumphs of certain believers to declare His grace in devotional literature like the Psalms, Song of Solomon
- f) Inspiration extends to the recording of falsehoods just as they were uttered - Satan Genesis 3:4.
- g) Inspiration guarantees the accuracy of all recorded prophecies.

THE BIBLE AND BELIEVERS

1. The Scriptures are designed to have the following effect on the believer:

- a) Illuminating (Psalm 119:130).
- b) Making wise the simple (Psalm 19:7).
- c) Producing faith (John 20:31), hope (Psalm 119:49, Romans 15:4), and obedience (Deuteronomy 17:19-20).
- d) Cleansing the heart (John 15:3, Ephesians 5:26) and the ways (Psalm 119:9).
- e) Keeping us from destructive paths (Psalm 17:4).
- f) Supporting life (Matthew 4:4 cf. Deuteronomy 8:3).
- g) Building up in the faith (Acts 20:32).

- h) Comforting (Psalm 119:82, Romans 15:4).
- i) Promoting growth in grace (1 Peter 2:2).
- j) Admonishing (1 Corinthians 10:11).
- k) Rejoicing the heart (Psalm 119:18,111).
- l) Sanctifying (John 17:17, Ephesians 5:26).

2. The Scriptures should be:

- a) Believed (John 2:22) and obeyed (James 1:22).
- b) The standard for teaching (1 Peter 4:11).
- c) Appealed to (1 Corinthians 1:31, 1 Peter 1:16).
- d) Read publicly to all (Acts 13:15).
- e) Known (2 Timothy 3:15).
- f) Received as the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13) with meekness (James 1:21).
- g) Searched (John 5:39, Acts 17:11).
- h) Used against our spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:11,17).
- i) Taught to everyone including children (Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19, Nehemiah 8:7-8).
- j) Talked about continually (Deuteronomy 6:7).
- k) Not handled deceitfully (2 Corinthians 4:2).

3. For the unbeliever the Scripture should be for:

- a) Regeneration (James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23).
- b) Quickening (Psalm 119:50,93).
- c) Converting the soul (Psalm 19:7).

BIBLE: INERRANCY

1. The Scriptures are quoted as the absolute standard of truth. (Daniel 10:21, John 10:35)
2. The source of the Scriptures is God, there is no imperfection or error permissible with God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 1 John 1:5, James 1:17)
3. The Scriptures therefore becomes the final authority in the resolution of disputes. (Romans 4:3, 11:2, Galatians 4:30)
4. The Scriptures are seen as authoritative. (Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27, Luke 4:8, Acts 23:5 Romans 11:8)
5. The person who does not know the Scriptures is in error. (Mark 12:24)
6. The Lord believed the Scriptures:-
 - (a) He implied there was only one Isaiah. (Isaiah 61:1,2 cf. Luke 4:16-21, Isaiah 53:1, and Isaiah 6:1-4, 9-10 cf. John 12:38-41)
 - (b) Jonah was a prophet not a myth. (Matthew 12:39, Luke 11:29)
 - (c) Daniel was a prophet not an historian. (Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14)
 - (d) Adam and Eve were created. (Matthew 19:8)
7. The Bible is called God's Word (Mark 7:13, Luke 5:1, 11:28, John 10:35, Acts 6:7, 12:24, Romans 10:17)

BIBLE: CANONICITY

"Doctrine of the Canon of Scripture"

DEFINITION - Canon - KANON (Greek) – a measuring rule or standard.

1. Why do we need a canon of Scripture?

- a) So that believers in every generation might have complete revelation from God.
- b) That man might have God's Word in writing (1 Corinthians 2:16).
- c) A need for the preservation and circulation of sacred writing in the time of oppression.

d) That people might know what was scripture and what was not, and know how God thinks.

2. CRITERIA FOR OLD TESTAMENT CANONICITY

a) The question of Inspiration (2 Peter 1:21) - every existing book of an acknowledged messenger of God was immediately accepted as the Word of God being commissioned by God to make known his will.

b) The principle of Internal evidence (Deuteronomy 31:24-26, Joshua 1:8, Judges 3:4). Nehemiah 8:1-8 shows that people were taught the word of God. Daniel in captivity read (Jeremiah 25:11--12, Jeremiah 29:10) and discovered Israel had a future giving rise to (Daniel 9:2, 5, 6. Zechariah 7:12)

c) Documentation by quotation - New Testament quotes by Jesus Christ and others declare them to be the Word of God, e.g. (Matthew 22:29, John 5:39, John 10:35)

d) The Law of Public Official Action (Nehemiah 8:5)

e) The Law of Cause and Effect. In this area canonicity is a recognition of what God has done in the field of communication. Passages such as (2 Kings 22:1 - 23:2 and Nehemiah 8) are not historical accounts of the ratification of the Canon but the result of the existence of the Canon.

f) Principle of external evidence - Israel had gone down spiritually prior to the Babylonian captivity (2 Chronicles 36:11-21). During captivity the Jews realised the importance of Bible doctrine and there was a spiritual resurgence led by people like Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi, Zerubbabel who extrabiblically attested to the canon of scripture. The Old Testament canon was closed in 425 BC-

3. DIVISION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT - Three sections:

a) Torah or Law - The Pentateuch consisting of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

b) The Nabiim or Prophets. This was divided into 2. The Former and the Latter Prophets, the division being the Babylonian Captivity.

c) The Kethubim or Writings which were further subdivided into 3 subsections:

i) Poetical Books - Psalms and Job.

ii) The Five Rolls or Megilloth books that were read at various feasts:

Song of Solomon - Passover

Ruth - Pentecost

Ecclesiastes - Tabernacles
Esther - Purim
Lamentations - Anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC-

iii) Historical Books - Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

4. NUMBER OF OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

The number of books in the Hebrew Old Testament was 24 compared to 39 in the English: 1st and 2nd Kings etc. are combined and many of the prophets also combined into scrolls, e.g. Matthew in the New Testament when quoting Zechariah said "As Jeremiah said" (Matthew 27:9-10), Zechariah was in the Jeremiah scroll (Zechariah 11:12-13).

5. CLASSIFICATION OF OLD TESTAMENT CANON

a) Homologoumena - these are writings that were accepted and had always been accepted as canonical.

b) Antilegoumena - these were five books which were eventually accepted as canonical which were disputed in the 1st - 5th centuries AD:

i) ESTHER - because the name God was not mentioned.

ii) SONG OF SOLOMON - this dealt with a love affair which the early church fathers apparently were somewhat embarrassed about and thought it non-canonical.

iii) ECCLESIASTES - where Solomon was looking at life from a human viewpoint which was not reconcilable with Judaism or Bible Doctrine.

iv) EZEKIEL - because chapters 40-48 seemed to contradict the Mosaic Law. Ezekiel 40-48 deals with annual sacrifices in the Millennium not the Levitical usage.

v) PROVERBS - because one proverb seemed to contradict another.

c) Pseudepigrapha - these were the false writings and were rejected. Such books as "The Penitence of Jannes and Jambres", "The Magic Book of Moses", are in this category.

d) Apocrypha - these were books written after 425 BC and have been rejected as not being canonical. The Apocrypha includes 14 books which are found in the

Septuagint and Vulgate but never in the Hebrew Canon. False doctrine found in the Apocrypha includes:

- i) Prayers and Offerings for the Dead - 2 Maccabees 12:42.
- ii) Suicide Justified - 2 Maccabees 14:41.
- iii) Atonement by Almsgiving - Ecclesiasticus 3:32, 4:1-11.
- iv) Salvation by Almsgiving - Tobit 4:11
- v) Cruelty to Slaves Justified - Ecclesiasticus 33:25-9.
- vi) Pre-existence of souls - Wisdom of Solomon 8:19,20.
- vii) Other fallacies include magical incantations, purgatory, assassination, angels having the power of intercession.

6. REJECTION OF OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

- a) These books are included in the apocrypha:
1 & 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, The wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The letter of Jeremiah, The prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The prayer of Manasseh, 1 & 2 Maccabees.
- b) The apocrypha was never in the Hebrew Canon.
- c) Neither Jesus Christ nor any of the New Testament writers ever quoted once from the Apocrypha.
- d) Josephus expressly excluded them from his history of sacred scriptures.
- e) No mention of the Apocrypha was made in any catalogue of canonical books in the first 4 centuries AD.
- f) These apocryphal books were never asserted to be divinely inspired or to possess divine authority.
- g) No prophets were connected with these writings.
- h) These books contained many historical, geographical and chronological errors.
- i) The apocrypha teaches doctrines and upholds practices which are contrary to the canon of scripture.

7. CRITERIA FOR NEW TESTAMENT CANONICITY

- a) Apostolicity - every book must either to have been written by an apostle or someone closely associated with an apostle (Mark with Peter, Luke with Paul). An early date of writing is essential - prior to 100 AD.
- b) Reception by the Churches - must be accepted by the churches as authentic when written.
- c) Constancy of Doctrine - with Old Testament scripture and Apostolic teaching.
- d) Inspiration - each book must have internal and external evidence of inspiration. This was evaluated using the spiritual gift of discernment during the formation of the canon (1 Corinthians 12:10).
- e) Recognition - each must be recognised by the Church Fathers as canonical. Four councils were held - Laodicea (336 AD), Damascus (382 AD), Carthage (397 AD), Hippo (419 AD).
- f) Internal - each must contain exhortation to public evaluation of the word (Colossians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:27, 1 Timothy 4:13, Revelation 1:3).

8. CLASSIFICATION OF NEW TESTAMENT CANON

- a) Homologoumena - the accepted books.
- b) Antilegomena - the disputed books which were eventually accepted - James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Hebrews.
- c) Pseudepigrapha - the false writings - Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Thomas, Acts of Andrew etc.
- d) Apocrypha - the rejected writings - Acts of Paul, Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermes, The Revelation of the Twelve, The Revelation of Peter.

ANGELIC CONFLICT [above]

1 Timothy Chapter 4

Verses 1 - 5

" I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

Background And Analysis

In the light of the reality of the Judgement Seat of the Lord, before which we will all stand to receive reward for what we have done on earth, we are to approach our job as pastors of the Word. What does this mean?

It should mean that we commit ourselves to thorough faithfulness to the Word, care for the Lord's people, and toughness of mind as we face those who will oppose us. Paul is building here on his earlier reflections on this topic in **2 Corinthians 5:9-20**, where he used the concept of "ambassadorship" to challenge the believers thinking about their daily behaviour. This is also in view as he lies in jail awaiting his execution.

The enemy empire has declared war on Christ and so the Lord's Ambassadors can expect jail, suffering, and execution, and for the next 200 years that will be the norm for genuine believers in the Roman Empire. We may be seeing the start of the same level of persecution in the "Revived Roman Empire" as it emerges fully from the shadows in our day, for the EC/USA are still, like old Rome, evil at their core.

In these verses Paul appears to be clear in his mind that he is "passing on the torch" (or the ruling baton of authority) to Timothy as the representative of the next generation of pastors, and as with all "handovers", he is careful to note, even repeat, all the basic points he has made before.

The very language here is similar to the words used by Roman Officers as they passed orders to the next detachment relieving them of a duty before they went back to barracks for the night. Timothy is to be, "a sentinel ever on duty", (E K Simpson), and so are we today. This is Paul's mental attitude as he faces death; he is returning to heavenly barracks and leaving Timothy and his generation to face the foe for the next years of the church's history.

Paul wants Timothy to preach, "the whole word and nothing but the word", (G Wilson). As Ironside also points out even more forcefully, "this is the charge of the Holy Spirit to every minister of the Gospel; preach the word! His one object should be to glorify God in setting forth his truth in the way he himself directs".

"Let him apply himself, sparing no labour or trouble!" (Fairburn). The military word, "charge", sets the tone. Paul solemnly commands Timothy to heed the instruction he is

about to give, making it even more serious by stating that it is being given in the presence of God the Father and the Lord himself. We will all stand before the Lord to receive reward for the things done in our body, and Paul is making it clear to Timothy that what he about to say is something for which great and eternal reward is at stake.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the doctrine of rewards does not focus on our enjoyment of rewards through eternity but rather on the glory our receiving them brings to the Lord, through whose power we won them! There clearly will be great joy and possibly great pleasure, but any narcissistic aspect of the eternal crowns is absent!

"Timothy is God's town crier", (R Mounce). We all are, as we preach the Word the "town criers" of our nations and cities. The herald (Greek - keruz) was the authoritative messenger of the king and responsible for changing nothing and covering everything that the king had ordered. This is our role as pastors, be it of a church or home group, to teach the whole counsel of the Word in a way that covers the things the Lord wants covered, with the power and emphasis that is required. Above all else he must preach doctrine. He must not simply tell jokes, anecdotes, bible stories, relate interesting illustrations, or read a verse then forget it.

"True preaching is the explanation and application of Bible doctrine. Anything else is just religious speech making", (W Wiersbe). As Mounce notes, "laymen are tired of oft repeated illustrations and well intentioned psychological tips under the guise of spiritual insight". I remember my dearly loved great mentor Dr J Vernon McGee telling a story of a member of his church relating to this. The man said to Dr McGee, "McGee I am engaged in great spiritual darkness in my daily work in the professional world, and when I come into church I need to hear a man who has been with God". It is a real encounter with the Word that believers need, in Holy Spirit focused power, not wishy-washy words.

What is needed is the systematic teaching of the Word so that all may hear, understand, believe, and apply it. "Note the emphasis upon sound teaching, we need to know the great truths of scripture in order that we may learn how to behave in accordance with the revelation God has given. Sincerity of purpose, (on the part of the preacher) is not enough, we are to be sanctified by the truth", (Harry Ironside).

As our late brother John Stott strongly affirms, "we have no liberty to invent our message but only to communicate the word that God has spoken and now has commanded to the church as a sacred trust,..., our responsibility is to be faithful in preaching the word, the results of the proclamation are the responsibility of the Holy Spirit, and we can afford to wait patiently for him to work, even if people forsake Timothy's ministry in favour of teachers who tickle their fancy, Timothy is to fulfill his ministry".

Some people will love the Word, others will be convicted and hate it. Harry Ironside tells a story about that from an old preacher friend of his. "You remember what Sam Jones said, 'if you throw a stone at a pack of dogs and one of them yelps, you know who got hit'".

The aorist tense of the verb to preach makes it clear that the preacher is to use every appropriate time to proclaim the Word of God, and it is to be done as the policy of the King of kings! Without the whole counsel of God being proclaimed accurately, and often, the church cannot be as it should be, for the people do not know what God thinks. The enemy's team has always been focused on stopping the systematic verse-by-verse preaching of the Word. Three-minute pod-cast, three-point sermons, are simply not good enough in today's world – believers need to really “know and apply” the full counsel of God's Word.

There will be appropriate times, but they are the times that there is opportunity, whether others think it is the "right" time or not. The pastor must be very spiritually sensitive to opportunity and take everyone they can whether others see it as an opportunity or not. We are to "take our stand", (be instant!) and really fight for the Word and strongly proclaim it.

Paul urges Timothy and us, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with the mental attitude of patience. Let us look at each of these words:

1. **Reprove.** - This is a legal word that means to prepare a case and present it in a way that is sure to secure the verdict you want. It is a word that means there is no effort spared in the preparation of the work, nor in the delivery.
2. **Rebuke.** - Those who do not measure up to God's standard must feel the sting of rebuke and be corrected. The objective is to change the person from a place where they will be judged to a place where they can be blessed.
3. **Exhort.** - The two earlier words are negative in that they face people up to errors, and this word indicates that it is to be done with encouragement also, so that the person who is corrected might grow. This is the same concept as "telling the truth in love".
4. **With all "long suffering".** - Patient endurance under pressure is what the congregation should see in the pastor. If we preach about a thing we must be prepared to show it in our life, and given the nature of many believers this is a character trait of the spirit filled believer that you will have plenty of opportunity to show! As Mounce notes, "the ministry is no place for an individual with a short fuse".
5. **Doctrine.** - Teaching systematically is the method for all pastors, for this alone helps believers grow.

"In every period of history there will be a season during which men refuse to listen to sound doctrine, as in the past in **Jeremiah 5:31, and Ezekiel 33:32**", (W Hendricksen). It is this issue that Paul addresses in the next verse. There are some for whom, as

Guthrie notes, "what they heard merely scratched their eardrums without penetrating further", (The Pastoral Epistles, page 167).

Some people are a law unto themselves; they are not teachable, for they accept only what suits them. They do not want healthy doctrine, for they are not interested in genuine spiritual growth for it takes time, and energy, and involves some suffering! They are people who cannot take the heat that God's training involves for the believer. They want an easier route that makes them look spiritual, without the energy or faith celebrating suffering, that true growth requires.

Paul uses a certain amount of sarcasm here. These people are like those with fleas, they have an itch, and they scratch it. Their attitude to the precious things of God is like that of an animal with an itch, they don't think, they just go for what feels good – temporary relief. They want instant gratification/relief. The result is terrible; they turn away from the truth and turn towards evil and finally receive the judgement that accompanies it!

To turn away from the teaching of God's word is to turn away from the source of truth, and so all that is left is "fables"; pleasant stories that please the Old Sin Nature but do not produce growth in the soul.

The real danger to the church is not from the alcoholic, criminal and the drug addict, for they know they are in sin and may repent, the real danger is from those who believe they are spiritual and teach doctrines that either deceive and distort truth, or put people into sleep, or fantasy land, and so either way, make them useless in the Angelic Conflict. These are the really dangerous satanic team-members.

Paul has clear instructions for Timothy regarding his role. The instructions begin with, "but you", reminding Timothy and us that whatever others do we must stand for God, and be different. Fairburn stresses this, "whatever others might do, and whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, this is what thou must do!"

The commands are firm.

1. **Watch!** - The nightly order to all guards in the Roman Army was this. Timothy is to be alert, sober, self-controlled, and ever vigilant, watching for the enemy at all times, and being ready to raise the alarm and fight.
2. **Endure!** - Endure evil as it attacks and as the enemy tries to wear you down with pressures. It means, as we have seen before, grit it out, be tough and robust under pressures, by depending on the Lord rather than on your own strength.
3. **Do the work!** - Timothy is to apply himself to the vitally important task of evangelism and teaching.

By fulfilling these things, he will give full proof of his calling and will complete the ministry he is responsible for to God. We would say that Timothy is to stick to his job, do the basics, and so not get sidetracked onto non-essentials. Distraction is the enemy's main tool – it always has been, and it always will be.

"The answer to the new threat is simply to persevere in the old task. It will not be easy, therefore face hardships, better perhaps, accept hardship, these are simply incidental to the main purpose, work to spread the gospel", (C K Barrett). Hearing the Lord's "well done, good and faithful servant", (**Matthew 25:21-23**), is what we must desire above all else as pastors and believers. It is the desire of the "herald" and the "ambassador", and all who are truly saved and fulfill these roles understand Paul's instructions. I find it instructive that the unbelieving liberal commentators do not "get" this letter. Of course they don't get this, for they are not "Ambassadors of Christ"; they are false brethren themselves!!!

The Lord is watching our concentration as we hear the Word and also our performance as we apply it. How much more fervent would we be if we remember that? The Lord is the judge of us, not any other person or power. It is his assessment alone that matters throughout eternity, it is his "well done" that we should desire.

He is coming again and is coming to judge the lost and set up his kingdom. We are part of this and yet few believers today even know about the doctrines of end times.

Paul was only in Thessalonica for a few weeks and yet he covered the doctrines of the Rapture, the Tribulation and the Second Advent. We should know these things, for such things will assist us in focusing our minds on what matters now and what does not.

As others in the church seek easy teaching and pleasurable activities that do not require concentration and energy, we must remain true to the Biblical standard and seek out the faithful teachers of the Word and hear and apply their words. We must set our hearts to avoid the "itchy ears" group and go for the Biblical group for our fellowship!

What is your gift as a believer? If you are an evangelist, are you doing what the Lord has called you to? If you have the "gift of helps" are you doing what you can in your local assembly or church? If the "gift of giving" is yours, are you earning what you can and giving what you should? If you are a teacher, are you in the right place for you in the church? If you have the gift of counsel or encouragement, are you serving in small groups where you can exercise your gift to the growth of the believers there?

The danger of not taking seriously the Lord's instructions through the apostle here is illustrated in the Lord's parable of the talents. Remember the Lord's words in **Matthew 25:14-30**, where the servant who had only one talent felt he couldn't use it and so lost everything. Many in the church feel "under-gifted", but the Lord gives gifts to us all (**1 Corinthians 12:7-11**), as he wills (vs 11), and according to our abilities (Matthew 25:15), and we must use our gifts or lose the opportunities and the rewards that would

have been ours. Each path is individual and is to be walked fully. As we see again and again, Culpable Space-Time Choices = Eternal Consequences.

The Lord's will for us is that each person functions as He has intended. He gave the gifts, and he intends us to use what we have received without trying to be something we are not (**1 Corinthians 12:20-27**). He holds us personally accountable and responsible! Let us be the people we are called to be on this brief dance through space-time.

As Ironside reminds us, "it is a poor kind of Christianity that rejoices in the fact that Christ has purchased for us eternal life through his death on the cross yet refuses to identify oneself with him in suffering and persecution".

Timothy, and all who would stand in the battle line against the enemy as pastors, must heed the orders in these verses. They are our daily orders to the very end of our earthly pilgrimage and must be actioned fully and completely.

Note the two groups of orders, with the warning that opposition without and apathy within the church may be our "battle zone" for teaching. We are to, preach, reprove, rebuke, exhort, teach doctrine, be watchful, alert, endure attacks and reverses, and do the work of evangelism and follow up.

We are held responsible for our ministry and only by completing the full course will we be approved by our Lord as a faithful servant. It is only completion of the job that gives "full proof" that we have done our best. Anything short of the best is not good enough for we are in a battle for the souls of men, and eternal reward or judgement are the stakes we fight for.

Paraphrase

"I solemnly warn you therefore before God and pass these orders on to you from the Lord Jesus Christ who will hold you accountable for them being actioned. Remember that it is he who will judge all mankind at his second coming when he comes to establish his kingdom. Preach the Word, be like a soldier in battle as you preach it, teaching whether it is thought to be the "right" time or not. Produce evidence to convict people of the truth! Sharply rebuke those who are entering into error! Encourage those who are flagging in energy! Do all this with patient endurance and systematic teaching of the doctrines that will build them up. For the time will come when people will not want to hear sound and healthy Bible teaching but will gather themselves around teachers who teach fables and foolishness that is unable to bring them to spiritual maturity. These are people with itchy ears, wanting things taught to them that immediately satisfy their lusts and produce pleasure rather than truth. So, like a good soldier, be watchful, alert, sober, and self controlled, endure all the pressures that come to you in your part of the

Angelic Conflict, and do the job of an evangelist, so accomplishing your duty fully and completely before God".

2 Timothy 4: 6 - 8

" For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Background And Analysis

Paul has called Timothy, and all of us as pastors, to do our very best, and complete our calling, and here in these verses he gives his mature testimony that he has completed his task and is now ready to lay down his burden knowing the job, for him, is done. He uses this testimony to remind each of us that this, that he is saying, should be the words for all to say at the end of their service in space-time.

His earthly end is "at hand" and the perfect tense reminds us that there is a time when "death is at the door", but that image is totally inappropriate for the believer. Death isn't at the door, for death was defeated, with sin, at the Cross and Empty Tomb. **John 8:51-58**. What is "at hand" is eternal life, what is about to happen is that the believer is to be greeted by the Lord Jesus Christ in person as they enter heaven. **Acts 7:55-60**.

The image he uses to start this section is that of the libation, or drink offering, that was poured out to the gods, or God, as a symbol of service offered. Note the perfect tense here, for eternal life is "at hand", with lasting blessing for the believer! Paul has fought (perfect tense – with eternal rewards), he has finished his course (perfect tense – with eternal rewards)!

The word for departure was used for the "weighing anchor of a ship", and so Paul sees his coming death as just that, a moving on to another destination; not an end, but a beginning of a new and wonderful journey to meet his master face the face. While this is poetic and to a sailor sounds good, it isn't likely that Paul had this metaphor in mind in land locked Rome in the midst of the Mamertine Dungeon (Mamertinum). It is the one that J R R Tolkien had of "Fair Havens" and the final sailing of Bilbo and the Elves, in the "Lord of the Rings", and it works, but Paul may have another image first in mind.

While this nautical image is a good picture, it is very probably not what Paul had in mind.

Paul has been speaking using military metaphors, and this is the best picture to keep in mind through these verses. He has been fighting and leading the attack on the enemy for many years now and he is at this point withdrawing from the field of combat for the last time to receive his eternal reward, leaving the next generation to carry on the fight. Let us use all the metaphors that communicate the doctrinal truth, but let's first get what

the apostle meant.... Paul will be joining the saints in heaven, to cheer us on from there, but the battle is ours now, he has done his earthly service.

This is "crunch time" for Paul, as death is for all of us! This is the time when people see how much we believe our testimony, and how strong our hold on doctrine really is. It is here that we see the final application of the things he said in Philippians (1:23, 2:17, 3:13, 14). It is as if Paul is saying to Timothy (who was the amanuensis for Philippians), "what I dictated to you then, that I was willing to depart and to have my life blood poured out, is now come to the test, I am face to face with it now!" (Lock). He "loves" (perfect tense – eternal results) the very thought of the Lord's appearing on earth, or his seeing the Lord in heaven, and the result is peace of mind in time and eternal joy.

Paul knows that the time for his execution is near, there is no hope of release now except the ultimate release straight into heaven itself. Of the five meanings of "analysis" (departure) one refers to the release of a prisoner from jail to full freedom, and this certainly is in view, just not legally/physically. As he waits, he is enjoying and using every minute. He, with Peter in his second letter (written about this time also, as they were in the same jail awaiting death), is the best example we have of the doctrine we call "Dying Grace" in the New Testament record.

Like all who are facing their end he reviews his life and states the things he is certain of. While some, like the liberal commentator Hanson, feels Paul's confidence is so different than his early letters as to be a strange thing, most see it as the evidence of the genuineness of the letters for this is what one would expect of the old Apostle as he sums up an eventful life with God. Hanson's doubts and questions simply underline the fact that he is an unbeliever who doesn't understand genuine faith, nor the reality of facing death, "In Christ Jesus". Satan's crew literally "don't get it" and that is often the clue to their identity, when they have so many things apparently correct.

Paul is as Ironside notes singing here, "this is Paul's swan song, ...but Paul did not wait until death to start singing. From the time he was saved by God's grace, he had a song in his heart which he continued to sing all his life". Paul sums up his testimony by three statements, drawing on three metaphors for the Christian life, soldier, athlete, teacher-priest (previously in **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** – the third person was the farmer):

1. **I have fought a good fight!** - He is saying here, I have no regrets, I have fought to win in every battle and I look back with pleasure at what God enabled me to do. So may we all one day! Perfect tense reminds us that the battle has eternal rewards associated with it; rewards to be received in heaven. Paul is perfectly relaxed about this, knowing he is in the Lord's hands for life, for death and for rewards.
2. **I have finished my course.** - The military march and athletic stadium is in view here. Paul is bringing together all his early athletic metaphors here, noting he has not only run well but he has run according to the rules and now he can claim his prize. He has finished the race, he has met the standard set by the judge of all.

Perfect tense = the assigned race has been run right to the last minute and the consequences of going the distance are eternal in the rewards associated. Same principle exactly in the military campaign.

3. **I have kept the faith.** - He had preserved the faith "once delivered" and he was able to pass on his message to Timothy intact, with no doctrine lost or diluted, but each pure and powerful as the Lord had taught him through the Holy Spirit. Paul had guarded the altar of his soul and everything stored away there was intact, safe as a temple treasury. Perfect tense here also emphasizes the eternal consequences of holding tight the faith in confident expectation of the Lord's deliverance, right to the end of this earthly life, and through the open door of death (opened by the Lord) into a blessed eternity with the Lord and saints forever.

He has perfect confidence, expressed in three perfect tenses, in the certainty of eternal rewards for service rendered, and is trusting in the righteous judge that he will receive gracious blessing in eternity as he has had gracious provision in time. His reward, like ours, is laid aside in heaven for us. A-C's team presently want to distract believers from these realities and we must not let that occur.

The way Paul expresses this it would appear that the rewards we are to receive are already there in heaven, as it were with our names on them, waiting for our arrival. Paul is expecting the "Crown of Righteousness", one of the victors crowns that is set aside for those who serve the Lord with distinction in time.

The Lord's return is when the crowns are given. **1 Corinthians 3:9-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10, Hebrews 6:7-12, 2 Timothy 2:12.** It is only at the end of the age that things are summed up on earth as also in heaven, so Paul has been waiting in heaven with all the other saints for nearly two thousand years now, yet he "felt" the reality of this event so strongly, for it will be the climax of this age.

His focus was on the realities of the Lord, and the fact that there was time between when he would die and when he would receive rewards was of no concern to Paul. He was seeing the Lord face the face (1 Corinthians 15) and that was enough until the plan of God had run its course.

In the churches the communion service reminds us that we remember the Lord's death, "until he comes", **1 Corinthians 11:26.** We are told, like the men in the parable, to "occupy until he comes!" (**Luke 19:11ff**), and to be ready for his appearing! (**Luke 21:32-36, John 21:22**). Jesus told his disciples that he was going in order that he might return again to bring all who love him into a new place of blessing forever with him, (**John 14:3-28**).

The issue for us is that we express our love for him appropriately, and that is by obedience to what he tells us to do, **John 14:15, 21.** John, in his first letter goes even further that Paul here, reminding the churches that to truly love him we need to be daily,

moment by moment occupied with and abiding in him in our hearts, and that only as we let him fill our daily lives are we really ready for his appearing. Are we “loving” (Perfect tense again) his appearing? This is the daily anticipation of eternal life with Him. Do we look forward to the very thought of the Lord’s return for us?

John, like Paul, calls us to "abiding" fellowship with him moment by moment, so that we are able to resist sin and bring glory to him in all we do. **1 John 2:27-2:3**. It is the daily purification from sin that is the Lord's objective for us in our loving him. Purity of life and witness will always be the result of loving him. **1 John 3:3**. Harry Ironside told a good story to illustrate this. "I will never forget, as a boy, how I used to be amazed as I heard an old preacher say in public prayer, 'Oh Lord, keep my eyes on the Lord Jesus, don't let me become a wicked old man'." Let's be like Paul, pouring ourselves out for God's Glory, (**2 Timothy 4**) not being “dirty old men” still ankle tapped by old lusts.

It is our service in time that counts for the winning of rewards, and yet so few believers are gripped by either the desire to receive reward or the necessity to serve. For Paul it was a drivenness that he could not control, "woe to me if I preach not the gospel!" **1 Corinthians 9:16-19**. We all need such a spirit within us for it is the mark that we are true sons and daughters of Christ.

Are we ready for our own death? This is the final and great test for all of us, and one we will all face unless we are part of the Rapture Generation. Why isn't it spoken more of in our churches today? This is the last taboo subject in many places, and for believers it should not be.

A society is sick when it talks of sex openly, the pleasures of which last for a short time, and refuses to talk of death, the consequences of which last forever! Let us be teachers of truth, for that alone prepares people for eternity.

Paul was able to look back with great satisfaction and few regrets for time spent as a believer. This must be our goal as believers for it is in the end of a life that we see the true value of it.

The old Greek philosophers said, "call no man happy until he is dead". By this they meant, that it is only in the moments before death that you see whether the choices he made in life really worked out for him, and he was truly satisfied and happy with his lot. Paul is very relaxed with his place with God and the role he has had, and he has great satisfaction seeing it completed.

Our final days are often simply a reflection of the whole tenor of our life. Paul had poured himself out in service throughout his life and so the last pouring was just the natural continuation of that. Paul was not faced with any death bed changes or confessions, he was going to die as he lived, consistently occupied with Christ and what he wanted done. Paul appeals to us for consistency, to live each day as if it is our last, and so please our Lord every moment.

Paul was a warrior for the Lord and so are we all as members in his army, engaged in a daily battle against an enemy that hates us. Daily to put our armour on, daily to receive our orders through prayer and Bible study, and daily to set our guard against evil and sin in all its forms; all this is our task as soldiers of Christ. It is the fulfillment of this that wins the Lord's praise, it is forgetting our place as soldiers that brings discipline to us in time and loss of reward in eternity.

Each of us have particular gifts and a place where these are to be ministered, and our job is to find this and be obedient in our service. We are not to try to usurp the place of others but to fulfill our own commission from the Lord. We are to "play by the rules" and not cause disruption or distress within the body of Christ but to work together with others to bring glory to the Lord who laid down his life for us. Our focus is to be on heaven not earth; we are to be heavenly minded rather than earthly minded. As we have seen in a previous chapter this is an important test for us all; do the things of time preoccupy us, or do we keep our heart set on the things of God?

Are we awaiting his coming? Do we look forward to his rule over this earth, and the new heavens? Are we showing this eagerness by and in our service now? For that is the way such anticipation is truly shown!

There is certainty in his return and there is certainty in the reception of rewards for all who will serve him now as they should. Ironside reminds us of this point. "I do not know of any scripture that promises rewards for post mortem gifts for the work of the Lord, ...it is far better to give what you can while in the body, for if given as unto the Lord this assures reward in that day". (page 249).

So many leave things in their will to the Lord's work that they could have given while alive, and shared then in a work and its achievements. It is a good thing to leave things in a will to a work, but there is no benefit to the person involved in time or eternity. Why wait believer, give your time, prayer, and if the Lord has blessed with money, give that now so that you may share in the work now as well as the blessings throughout eternity of being part of a great work.

The testimony of Paul must be the testimony we seek as pastors. **Can we say now** in our ministries that we are;

1. **Fighting** the fight that the Lord has placed us in with a whole hearted commitment to winning for him?
2. **Striving** by his rules to complete everything that is before us to do now, looking to satisfy his demands on our life?
3. **Holding** truth and **Obedying** all orders received and **Guarding and Proclaiming** the truth we have received as the most precious thing we have?
4. **Loving** the brethren, loving the Lord, loving his words.

Rewards are there not for us to glory in but for more glory to come to the Lord as throughout all eternity we will be visible reminders of what the Lord's power was able to achieve with a mere man or woman who was simply committed to him.

All our service to the Lord must be given with the mental attitude of the soldier, the athlete and the priest, looking to our master for his well done in all we do, and being focused on the eternal realities rather than the temporary gains of time.

Paraphrase

"For now I am ready to face my death, and the time of my execution draws near. Throughout my life as a believer I have poured myself out in service and now my last days and hours are to be an ongoing drink offering poured out to bring glory to God. As I see my physical death it is simply a striking of my earthly camp, so that I, as now an old soldier, can move away from the field of battle and take my well earned rest with my commander. I have fought a really triumphant fight, I have finished the particular course set for me, I have fought by the rules, I have obeyed all orders received, and have kept safe the truth that the Lord committed to me. Right now, there is a reward laid aside for me in heaven, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me on that great day when he sets up his kingdom. This is not a reward that is for me only but is for all who love him, serve him, and are eagerly waiting for his second coming."

2 Timothy Chapter 4 Verses 9 - 15

" Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comst, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words."

Background And Analysis

Paul is very keen to see Timothy. He must have believed he had just enough months to live so as to allow for the delivery of this letter and for Timothy to take ship and come, but he knew it would be a close thing, so Timothy is urged to hurry. He must really make haste or he will be too late. This is emphasized, with the words to make haste, without delay, and come, all indicating the importance of Paul's urging.

He misses his old friend and wishes for one last personal conversation before he dies, but this is not a self-centered desire for fellowship. It must have been a critical conversation, or critical needs, for to visit Paul was to court death, and Paul would not hazard his friend's life at this time unless absolutely necessary.

When we face a great crisis, it is a wonderful thing to do it with a chosen group of friends. Paul desires Timothy especially because so many of his old team have gone off and away from him during this last imprisonment. As we read these names and their actions, reflect upon the enemy team's "tricks and tools" to rob believers of their eternal rewards and see how many of Paul's group were led astray and robbed at the very end.

1. Demas the forsaker. - There are no good words that can be said of Demas now. Once he was the trusted companion but now he is one who has forsaken Paul and left him to his fate. It was a dangerous thing to stay with a condemned man, for to assist a traitor made the state feel you were one also. Luke ran this risk but Demas loved life too much to risk his own life for the sake of Paul.

Paul is focused on the rewards of the next life, but Demas has his eyes full of things of this life only; he was pre-occupied with the details of life rather than the lasting things of eternity.

It is often the last thing we hear about a man that sets his reputation, and so it is with Demas. He may have made good later, we do not know. We are left with the sober warning of the futility of following after worldly things when eternal issues are at stake. Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24

2. Crescens to Galatia. - As Hendricksen says, "in contrast with Demas we must believe that both Crescens and Titus had gone where duty called them".

Fairburn notes, "they are not included in the blame associated with the name of Demas, yet we cannot say with Theodoret that they were absolutely free from blame, and that they were sent into those regions to preach the gospel the language of the Apostle implies they went of their own accord, not that they were sent by him".

Stott believes, "the other three were not censured for their departure", and yet it is clear there is something wrong here, for Paul "sends" Tychicus off to Ephesus, and this reference is well separated from the names of the other three.

3. Titus to Dalmatia. - Titus had been asked to join Paul there many years before, Titus 3:12, and perhaps now had decided rather than wait with Paul for the end they should all get busy and go to where they could minister before they too were arrested. Whatever the reason for the two men leaving, Paul felt deserted, and needed the comfort of his old "son" to ease the burden he felt, but much more I suspect also.

Guthrie suggests that Titus has completed the Cretan assignment and now is off to follow up in Dalmatia. Church tradition records that he returned to Crete and served as its first bishop until his death and burial there.

4. Luke is still with Paul, and Paul notes that he "alone" is with him underlining the sense of desertion and betrayal, or just loneliness. Luke would have had to do everything for Paul, including washing toilet, and preparing food, as in jail there was only food and any small comfort if a man had friends who were there.

Sir William Ramsay notes, quite rightly, "the only way in which Luke could be allowed to accompany Paul and to be always close to him was that was understood to be a slave attending on his master Paul", (Pictures of the Apostolic Church, Page 312). Luke is certainly the best example of the truly humble Christian worker content with second place, for he faithfully backed up the great apostle without rebellion, or ever seeking the limelight for himself, even though he was the human author of two books of scripture.

5. John Mark has been reconciled to Paul many years before, and he is the one who Paul wishes to see also before he dies as one who can bring comfort to his soul at such a time as this. The words Paul uses are also indicative of haste. In effect he says, as you pass his house pick him up and bring him along with you. Mark was clearly a man now who would respond to the call of service.

Paul is going to need help in those last days, and he is calling his best to him to assist at the crucial time to keep him strong, fed, warm and clean, so he can go to his death with as much dignity as possible, and so bring honour to the Lord. Mark is coming to give "service" and what is meant is that he is to be a valet, butler, footman, groomsman, prayer partner, Parchment reader, toilet emptier, or whatever Paul required. This is the attitude that is required of the man who would serve the Lord; let him be ready to do anything to assist one of God's servants.

5. Tychicus is a well known figure from Paul's letters. He was a man Paul could trust with large sums of money, and carried offerings from the Asian churches to Jerusalem, **Acts 20:4-6, 2 Corinthians 8:19ff**. He was with Paul in Rome during Paul's first imprisonment, and carried the letters to Ephesus and Colossae, **Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7-9**.

He was the man to relieve Titus while he went to Nicopolis, **Titus 3:12**, and had clearly been serving with Paul after his release from that first imprisonment. We do not know anything about this man after this record. He was certainly a man who could be used to fill in for key men, and not cause trouble or schisms. He had one goal and that was to bring glory to God, he was a man without pride or arrogance.

Paul was now thinking very practically. He was sure he was to die but he did not know when, so there was a winter to think about. He had to get Timothy and John Mark to him

before the ships stopped sailing and also he had to get the clothing and other things he needed to be prepared to spend another winter in the Roman jail. "If his destination to suffer martyrdom should somehow be postponed till that season, he would need the garment to protect him from the cold" (Fairburn). He asks for some interesting things.

1. Cloak. - This is a large full length garment that would be used as a blanket as well as a winter garment. It was the difference between survival or not in a winter. It was forbidden under the Mosaic Law to keep a cloak held for surety of a debt overnight. A man had to be given the cloak back to ensure a debtor did not die of exposure. Paul wants to ensure he is not going to die before the Lord wants. He is in no hurry, he wants things to happen in the Lord's time and the Lord's way, and that is the Roman Lictor's axe.
2. Books. - Paul had left several things with Carpus at Troas, things he hadn't had time to gather at his arrest. The books would have been very valuable, probably copies of the Old Testament in the Greek language, the Septuagint. A bound volume would be worth a great deal of money, a man's wages for a year! Paul wanted to use whatever time he had to study more and teach more. Let none despise study, right till the last day.

The author knew the late Professor E M Blaiklock, who as he died of cancer had the same mental attitude we see here with Paul. While in bed on his last day alive the Professor was reading and marking Greek work set for students and reading their books, so that he might help others. He placed his last piece of work down and died. This is where Paul was, he was ready to serve right until the last moment.

3. The parchments. - These were the even more valuable vellum manuscripts of the Old Testament, also for study and teaching purposes. Barrett raises the question as to whether the parchments may have been proofs of his citizenship, but these would have been in the Scriptorium at Rome anyway. As Hendricksen says, "is it not natural to assume that the Lord's prisoner desired above all else to spend his few remaining weeks or months in meditating on the Word of God", (page 323).
- 4 Paul next mentions a major enemy of the gospel, who attacked him in the past. From the context it would appear he lived in the province of Asia rather than in Rome, as he warns Timothy against him. He may even have been in Troas and that Timothy will be in danger as he passes through that port, that possibly Alexander was the man who set up Paul's arrest there. (J Pollock, The Apostle, page 234, and also Hanson, in discussion of verse 14). He was certainly more than just, "a troublesome member" (E Scott).

It is well that we are warned of evil men who stay within the fold of the church, so that we might beware of them and their influence. All too often evil men within the church are protected by a wall of silence when members of the church will not speak up about their

evil for fear of embarrassment or legal action. Like Paul we must not mince our words, our brothers in ministry deserve warning that they might take heed and protect themselves. Paul speaks of his certain judgement; for in absolute justice and perfect timing "the Lord will reward him" (future active indicative) for his evil.

The Lord will deal with these men, but until God's axe of judgment falls we must beware! He will be judged according to his works, that is, the Lord will judge him in accordance with what he has done, and the evil done to Paul will be visited on him.

This man showed his colours by opposition to the words of the apostolic band. This is the test of evil men, that they hate the truth, and therefore hate and oppose the preachers of it. **John 15:18-25**. We must take Paul's warning seriously. Paul uses the military order, "guard!" (Greek, phulasso, present active imperative), and then adds that he has "greatly" opposed them, indicating that this Alexander had put all his energy into opposing the apostle and his words.

"May we be encouraged by Luke and warned by Demas, to go on faithfully in the path of service to which our God has called us" (Ironsides).

What examples of service do we have here, men like Luke and Timothy and Mark, men who would risk their lives for their old teacher and serve him as a slave would serve and do it all "as unto the Lord". This is where we must be in our attitude towards the servants of the Lord.

There are words of warning here that we might not be found in the end to betray our Lord or his men. We don't know if Crescens and Titus are in or out of God's will when they left Paul, but their departure hurt the old man. Let us be careful of our reading of the Lord's will for us. Tychicus is a great reminder of the faithful pastor, ever ready to stand in the breach to support others and fill a pulpit for an absent pastor without any pride or contentiousness.

As we think upon Alexander we are face to face with evil, and every church has its members who, like him, can withstand the faithful words of the pastor. Let us beware of all such men.

As we meditate upon what Paul asked for in these last months of his life do you feel convicted of your attitudes towards things? Here we have the great apostle who owned only one overcoat, so that when winter came, he had to ask for it to be brought to him. We see a humble and poor man and yet the most powerful man in the Roman Empire! Our Lord's words as he spoke of the lilies of the field (Matthew 6), reminding us that we are not to seek riches but his will, find a wonderful fulfillment in Paul's last months. Also his own words, in **1 Timothy 6:8**, "having food and raiment let us be content", (Also **Philippians 4:11**) are proved true by example.

This is the example we must follow, rather than the jaded hypocrisy of the super wealthy pastors of our bloated age. Let none of us ever count wealth and earthly position as

evidence of anything in the spiritual arena. Let us beware of the rich and powerful, for all the Lord's servants were, became poor, or were ready to give all in their service for him.

In this section we are challenged as in all others to develop our character in a godly manner in order that we may serve the Lord and his men in a better way. We are to serve as John Mark and Luke, ready to do anything to the furtherance of the gospel, and like Tychicus to be ready to go anywhere and fill in for others, without desiring their ministries, but being content to support God's work wherever it is done.

Each of the men mentioned in this section give us either example or warning. Crescens, Demas and Titus have left Paul, although two of them maybe for good reasons have headed away, but we must beware that we do not put our plans ahead of God's. Had these men stayed would Paul have required Timothy and John Mark to make such a perilous journey? We can only speculate! We do know the importance of walking with the Lord and supporting his men in their work until it is over, or we are relieved by others. Let us be sure of our priorities and not be like Demas who loved what this world had to offer and so lost eternal reward.

Paul's attitude must be a challenge to each of us. As he faces his own death, he is focused on passing on instructions for the generation that will follow him. We must also be so focused on God's work rather than ourselves that we do the work and complete the task assigned to us.

Paul faced enemies as all who will serve the Lord must, and he was blunt about the dangers they posed. He warns his men of Alexander, and all who would follow Paul must be ready to identify, and deal with the Alexander's who will cross their path.

Once again, we see the things that matter for the mature believer, and they are related to finishing the course set for us that the Lord's work may come to fruition and completion before we pass over to the next generation. Let us serve as Paul did!

Paraphrase

"Do your very best to come without delay to me here in Rome, for Demas has abandoned me, having loved the pleasures of this world more than the Lord's will, and he is gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, and only Luke is left with me. Call by Mark's house and get him to accompany you for he is useful for service and I really need a man like him with me now. Tychicus have I sent on to Ephesus to relieve you. As you come call in at Troas and collect the cloak I left with Carpus, also the books and don't forget the valuable parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm and evil, but the Lord will give to him what he deserves according to what he did to me. Beware of him for he has put all his energy into opposing our words."

Notes

FRUIT INSPECTING

Getting the Analysis Criteria Biblically Right facing the Deceptions we presently confront in Media and the Internet itself. If we do not see the "Fruit of the Holy Spirit" in the life of a "person of influence" we are to doubt their status and be suspicious that they are part of the enemy's team. They may not be, but it is safest to be sure and be really careful of all who do not show these Spiritual Fruit in daily life. I also place the subject of biblical "Giving" here also, as its money that is the central target of most of "A-C's Prep-Team" as they want to rob genuine ministry of all they can.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

1. The filling of the Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life (love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance). (Galatians 5:22-23) Note that "fruit" is singular - all the characters are produced at the same time in the filling of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Fruit of the Spirit is also listed as follows:-
Romans 14:17 - Righteousness, Peace, Joy
Colossians 3:12-15 - Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness
1Thessalonians 1:3 - Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope
3. In principle, it is the imitation of God (Ephesians 5:1). The reason we are left on the earth after salvation is to produce fruit. (John 15:16, Philippians 4:17)
4. We produce fruit by hearing the word (Mark 4:20-28) and applying it to our lives. (Hebrews 4:2)
5. Failure to grow and produce fruit means divine discipline even to the point of the believer's early departure from this life. (Luke 13:6-9 John 15:2)
6. Rewards in eternity are distributed on the basis of faithful production. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10)
7. Fruit is not to be confused with spiritual gifts. These are listed in (Romans 12:6-8; 15:18-19; 1Corinthians 12:8,10; 1Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:1) and other places.

8. One can know Christians by their fruit (Matthew 7:16-20; Luke 6:43-45; 1John 3:10 & 11; John 15:8) especially by their love (John 13:35) but not by their gifts, as Satan can imitate them (2Thessalonians 2:9).

9. Three natural fruits represent some of the facets of the fruit of the Spirit: Apples - love, Grapes - Joy, Pomegranates - Peace.

10. In Galatians 5: 22-23 the fruit of the Spirit is divided into three sections

[a] Love, Joy and Peace towards God;

[b] Patience, Goodness and Kindness towards others;

[c] Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control towards oneself.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIVING

1. Giving is an important part of spiritual life. It includes your attitude, the giving of yourself, your capacity as well as your possessions. Giving is as much a part of worship as praying, singing, listening to teaching, observing the Lord's Table, reading the Word. It is a function of priesthood for team work and often to sustain the work of leadership.

2. Basic Principles of Giving

(a) Old Testament Giving - this giving was grace giving just as it is in our age. (Proverbs 11:24,25)

(b) New Testament Giving - (2 Corinthians 9:7) also grace giving.

(c) Tithing - this means ten per cent. It was a form of income tax in Israel. Offerings or giving were above this. Tithing was for all Jews, offerings for believers only. It should be remembered that Israel was a theocracy.

[i] In Israel two tithes were required annually

[ii] Tithe 1 - for the maintenance of the Levites (Numbers 18:21, 24) Civil servants in a theocracy.

[iii] Tithe 2 - for national feasts and sacrifices (Deuteronomy 14:22-26)

[iv] Every third year a third tithe was required:-

[v] Tithe 3 - for the poor of the land. (Deuteronomy 14:28, 29) Social security. In (Malachi 3:8-10) it mentions tithes and offerings, the tithes to be brought to the storehouse or treasury.

(d) The time to give - the first day of the week. (1 Corinthians 16:2)

(e) How much - as God has prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2)

3. General Scripture on Giving. (2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9)

(a) 2 Corinthians 8:1-8. Contrasts the Macedonian givers to the Corinthian givers, the former having been made poor by Roman oppression gave liberally. The Corinthians, the richest Church in Greece, gave sparingly.

- (b) Giving is an attitude of grace and inner happiness rather than compulsion or the amount donated (2 Corinthians 8:2)
- (c) Before money is given you must give yourself. (2 Corinthians 8:5)
- (d) Giving is as important an act as any other act in the fellowship. (2 Corinthians 8:7)
- (e) Giving is love giving not law giving (2 Corinthians 8:8)
- (f) Giving depends on being oriented to grace, the prime example being the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- (g) Money given in the Lord's service must be properly administered. (2 Corinthians 8:19-21)
- (h) If you give in grace you reap bountifully. If you give in legalism or with strings you reap sparingly. (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- (i) How to give. Giving is a reflection of your character, by grace not habit. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- (j) God has given unto us his unspeakable Gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Peter 2:24)
- (k) Giving should be regular. 1 Corinthians 16:2.
- (m) As we are prospered so we give: God provides the capital with which to give. 2 Corinthians 9:7-10.
- (n) Mature believers are most effective givers. 2 Corinthians 9:10. Generosity of mind leads to generous giving. 2 Corinthians 9:11. Philippians 4:14-18.
- (o) The pastor's logistical support comes from giving: He makes an issue out of the word never money, if he does his job God will provide the money. Pastor provides spiritual food and receives money for physical needs. Mutual blessing is thus assured, as the people show their appreciation for the ministry of the word. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, Philippians 1:3-5, 4:10, 4:14.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – GIVING – STEWARDSHIP

1. As all provision is from God it is the believer's duty to be a wise steward of not only his money but his time and talents. In this manner true orientation to grace is shown.
2. Your relationship with allocation of your talents, time and possessions to God will determine the quality of your Christian life. Acceptance of grace as the basis of giving should become the basis of generous giving. (2 Corinthians 9:6)
3. There are five reasons for giving to the work of the Lord.
 - a) That God's work might be supported. (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
 - b) That God might be glorified. (2 Corinthians 9:12)
 - c) That needy saints might be provided for. (Acts 2:44-45, 11:29)
 - d) That other Christians might be challenged. (2 Corinthians 9:2)
 - e) That the giver's life might be blessed. (2 Corinthians 9:6)
4. Giving alms to the poor:
 - a) In the Bible, almsgiving means giving to the poor.
 - b) The Pharisees distorted the principle of giving by making a public display. The Lord Jesus rejected this pride. (Matthew 6:1-4).

c) When we give alms we have to do it in secret, so that we honour God and not ourselves. (Matthew 6:1-4).

d) The giving of alms to the poor is encouraged. (Luke 12:33; Acts 10:2,4,31) and will be rewarded (Matthew 6:1-4).

Appendix 1.

Part of An Assignment presented by one of our students, Joanne Inivale, for an EBCWA Diploma of Theology Paper.

Examples of Distractions Christians Face Today

1.	Digital Overload - constant notifications from smartphones, apps and social media - scrolling endlessly instead of praying or reading scripture i.e. checking Facebook or Instagram first thing in the morning instead of starting the day with a devotion
2.	Entertainment Culture - Binge-watching TV shows or streaming services - Sports or gaming consuming free time i.e. spending hours watching Netflix but being 'too busy' for church small group
3.	Career and Success Pressure - Work becomes an identity rather than a calling - Overworking, leaving no margin for spiritual growth i.e. Regularly skipping church or family time because of career demands
4.	Financial Pursuits and Materialism - chasing more income, possessions or luxury - constant comparing with others' lifestyles i.e. Prioritizing buying the newest gadgets over generosity or giving
5.	Social Media Comparison - feeling inadequate by comparing your life to carefully curated online images - seeking likes and approval rather than God's approval i.e. measuring spiritual worth by how many people 'like' a Bible verse post
6.	News and Politics Overload - getting absorbed in news cycles or political debates - letting fear, outrage or tribalism replace faith and unity in Christ i.e. spending hours arguing online instead of praying for leaders or serving neighbors
7.	Busyness and Overcommitment - calendar packed with activities, leaving no time for quiet with God - even good things (ministry, volunteering) becoming overwhelming i.e. being too exhausted for personal devotion because every evening is booked
8.	Personal Comfort and Convenience - avoiding spiritual disciplines because they are hard or uncomfortable - choosing entertainment over spiritual challenge i.e. skipping church cause it's easier to stay home in pajamas
9.	Worry and Anxiety - obsessing over personal problems, health or the future - allowing fear to crowd out trust in God i.e. constantly worrying over finances instead of trusting God's provision
10.	Superficial 'Spirituality' - settling for inspirational quotes or motivational content instead of deep Scripture study - mistaking feelings for spiritual maturity

Appendix 2.

Satan's Religious Deceptions

Jesus our Lord warned the disciples very early (**Matthew 7:13-23**) that the main tool of the enemy was religion without genuine Holy Spirit fruitful relationship with God. That the danger of deception by the enemy was far more serious than they had ever thought, for the keepers of the legalistic Scribal laws were servants of Satan not of God, and by their life "fruit" they would finally be exposed.

Even then, they would persist in their legalism or demonic power-wielding, because they genuinely believed they were "right" because of the temporal power they had, or the spiritual powers they drew on. On both counts they were deceived, and like the "rich man" of **Luke 16:19-31** they woke up too late one day in Hell. They did not see at all that it was satanic religious deception that drove them, not any genuine relationship with God as Lord and Saviour. They were/are shocked to be in Hell!

We are surrounded by religion today that calls itself "Christian". Yet some totally ignore the Bible or doubt it's truth beyond "mythic-significance", and others do wield true spiritual power but never check its source, for Satan is a miracle worker. Let us check out the truths below and "sit-with" the many scriptures in their contexts and then understand why so many who use Jesus' name do not know Him at all. Let us reflect on the Lord's words and see why so "few" find His Path for their life, but let us not despair, but "looking unto Jesus" and being guided by the Holy Spirit through the Word of Life continue to serve Him as we advance towards the end of this phase of world history.

THE COUNTERFEITS OF SATAN THE DECEIVER

1. Doctrine of Demons (1 Timothy 4:1) – teaching that deceive people into thinking the demons behind false religion are actually representing the Lord Jesus Christ – they use his name, without his full title and without any "evidence" (fruit) of his presence in their lives, for He is not there.

2. False Communion Table (1 Corinthians 10:20-21) – false religion specializes in "fellowship" that comforts the deceived lost and makes them "feel" spiritual and accepted – it meets social and community needs without genuine spirituality or eternal community of the saints.

3. False Ministers (2 Corinthians 11:12-15) – the false teachers and false prophets who have power from the satanic to deceive and act as if they are “Christian”, but lack the real “fruit” in their lives. They are wolves not sheep.
4. False Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3-4) – Satan’s “good news” is full acceptance of all and everything that people want to believe, but no reference to holiness before God except a perverted viewpoint of it.
5. Fake Spirituality (Galatians 3:2-3) – false feelings of being special, and deceived into thinking you are acceptable without genuine life-changing relationship with the Lord.
6. Self-Righteousness (Matthew 19:16-28) – false views of righteousness – by human works.
7. Real but demonic Power (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10) – the demon’s real power expressed so as to impress the lost into thinking, “this must be of God”.
8. False “gods” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) – many things and powers are worshipped and honoured but not the One True God.
9. Many Religions (Matthew 23) – “many paths up the mountain” – falsehoods all embraced in the spirit of ecumenical unity – all religions accepted as equals – all striving together towards a comprehension of godhead.... Falsehoods labelled as truths.

SATAN'S STRATEGY OF DECEPTION

1. Believers are warned against him and his tactics. (Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8). This warning is consistently given post-Pentecost and reminds us that Satan and his demons are not bound now, but very active indeed until the Lord’s Return.
2. We must be ready and alert to deception and falsehoods at all times, for the enemy will never stop trying to deceive and destroy the truth until he is judged at the Lord’s Second Advent... (2 Corinthians 2:11)
3. Satan is a deceiver and a counterfeiter. He uses deception - without deep study and reflection it does not initially appear obviously wrong or sinful - but very subtle changes are made to the truth (Genesis 3:1). Remember, a counterfeit looks like the original – and it requires serious study and examination to spot it. 2 Timothy 2:15-16, 3:16-17.
4. Satan is described as an "angel of light" - often seeming attractive and "good". (2 Corinthians 11:14.) Satan is play-acting as if he is truly a “new-age Jesus” – an angel of light – and every false appearance of demons masquerading as true visions from God have light streaming from them.

5. His tactics

a) Towards unbelievers.

i) to blind them regarding the gospel and deceive them into accepting a false “gospel”, so they remain deceived to death, or get disgusted and insult all religion thereafter. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

b) Towards believers.

i) Satan seeks to hinder our growth and witness. (1 Peter 5:8)

ii) Satan will mislead into false doctrine and legalism or licence – he doesn’t care whether the believer is a fornicator or five-point Calvinist, as long as they do not look anything like the real Jesus. (1 Timothy 5:14-15)

iii) He persuades believers to ignore the will of God through disobedience to the Word of God as they follow his “traditions” and doctrinal falsehoods. (Genesis 2:17, James 4:7-8)

iv) Satan often attacks our assurance of salvation so that we doubt God’s Word.

v) Worry (1 Peter 5:7-9) rather than Abrahamic faith (Hebrews 11).

vi) Fear of death, rather than believing the words of Jesus and the Apostles (Hebrews 2:14-15)

vii) He accuses believers of sin both to God and to the believer (using guilt). (Revelation 12:9-10, Job 1:6-11). Will the believer believe in true biblical forgiveness or succumb to emotionalism?

viii) He takes our focus off Christ by getting eyes on self (1 Corinthians 1:10-11), on people (1 Corinthians 1:12), on things (Hebrews 13:5-6).

ix) When we don’t allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives, we open ourselves up to Satanic attack. (1 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Timothy 5:14-15)

x) The Lord will allow Satan to attack a believer as discipline for unconfessed sin, (1 Timothy 1:20 cf 2 Corinthians 12:7), reversed in a millisecond by Confession (1 John 1:5-10).

xi) Satan cannot indwell or possess a believer, only beguile them. (Galatians 3:1)

c) Towards the world in general.

The World (Cosmos-System) - Satan tries to deceive the nations. (Revelation 20:7-10). He is doing a great job with the UN “Agendas” that pretend that man by his own efforts can solve the world’s problems, and so by false theories and plans Satan and his crew create more chaos and more desperation. Remember his policy is to make the unbelievers so desperate that they accept his “world-ruler” to “sort the mess out”, but Anti-Christ will create a bigger mess, for Satan cannot build, his “fruit” is always destruction. Do not expect the deception to be unmasked now, nor desperation to produce intelligent political policies. All this Satanic orchestrated mess only unhinges finally in the Great Tribulation Period, but even then, sadly the majority of mankind prefer the deception of Satan’s man, the Anti-Christ, to the truth of the Word. Remember the lessons of Daniel and Revelation.

Bethlehem – Bay of Plenty – NZ

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