

Elijah's Lesson from God

If God is calling you to the recognition that many churches have at their heart a system of Church government where a man or men have placed themselves in ranks above God's people, in effect standing between them and their God and ruling over God's people, even determining what they should believe, then thank God for delivering you from idolatry.

The Apostle John was given a vision of this dangerous false system in Revelation 17:5, *'And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.'* It is condemned by Jesus Christ in Matthew 20:25-27, *'But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant'*, and again by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:3, *'Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.'* In Revelation 18:4 we are told to depart from this Babylon, both spiritual Babylon in the form of such false churches and also physical Babylon, which in chapter 18 is actually a geographical place soon to suffer catastrophe, *'And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'*

The reason for the need to remove ourselves from such apostate churches is that idolatry pollutes the participants, and Jesus Christ requires those He calls to become His Bride in the first resurrection, to remain unpolluted once they have recognised and repented of their error. Revelation 14:4, *'These are they which were not defiled with women[false and apostate churches]; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men[Greek- bought from the men], being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.'*

Strangely though, very few have the courage to leave such churches. It may be because they often **claim to be the only True Church**, and people fear expulsion. Superficially they seem to be so right, so powerful and effective. They often have great wealth, impressive buildings, elitist leaders, expensive television ministries and effective magazines. To leave would mean leaving behind brethren we have known and loved, possibly even being 'marked' or 'shunned' by them. And yet, if God has opened your mind to that idolatry, you may know that it was predicted to occur even in God's end time Temple, the Church, Ezekiel 8:5-6, *'Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.'*

You will also understand that God demands pure holiness and zeal from His servants and that idolatry results in flawed doctrine, even as far as the breaking of the fourth commandment and the following of an unbiblical man made calendar which falsely determines the wrong Holy Days of God (cf. Leviticus 23:29) days which should be the very sign that sanctifies us. Exodus 31:13, *'Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.'*

Idolatrous churches refuse to even seriously examine any doctrines which could result in change and reduced income, but as we saw from Ezekiel, God withdraws from idolatry and apostasy and takes away His spirit so that they no longer grow in grace and knowledge, and thus lack the later revelation which God's true saints need in order to understand their God given end time role, Daniel 12:9, *'And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'* Sadly their members remain in ignorance of the scriptures which detail what God requires of them during the events which will lead up to the resurrection. As a result, they will face instead, the last 3 years of the Great Tribulation.

However, even if once we have made the decision to reject idolatry **and stand alone, if necessary**, for what we read in the Bible, we face spiritual challenges which can curtail our usefulness to God. This is what happened to the prophet Elijah after his greatest triumph.

Elijah was a faithful servant of the Lord who successfully battled with 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel, in the crisis where God poured down fire from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice, leaving the false prophets open to judgment and slaughter. (I Kings 19)

He had fought the great Baal apostasy and idolatry for years, and though he knew there were others still faithful to God, when the enraged Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him, he fled, first from Israel to Judah and then, still fearful, 40 more days to Mount Horeb, the Mount of God.

The prophet's fearful conduct was brought about through his exaltation (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9) which caused him to look to himself instead of to the Lord, to concentrate on his own plight and situation instead of God's purpose for him. All of us can be subject to this human failing.

In his self-centred introspection, he asked God to allow him to die, 1 Kings 19:4, *'But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.'* And by the time he arrived at Horeb, his dejection had persuaded him that he was the only one still faithful in the whole of Israel, verse 10, *'And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.'*

God quickly disabused him of this error, verse 18, *'Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him,'* and gave him a further 3- fold commission, providing for us an example, and warning that we, to whom He has granted illumination which may free us from idolatry and dominion, and which can result in our reception of deeper prophetic understanding, should beware of pride in that independence and new found knowledge which can prevent us joining together with others of like mind for the furtherance of our joint commission from God, Matthew 28:19-20, *'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.'*

This too is error, but it is a common error. It seems that having escaped a large idolatrous organisation, the tendency is to go to the other extreme and become isolated and inward looking, like Elijah. We may become part of a small group, involve ourselves in good works, or even create a web site, but because we have come to understand more deeply scriptures that other similar groups are unaware of, we shy away from association with our brethren.

I am sure that the small independent churches we read of in the New Testament had similar differences in depth of understanding on minor points too, but that did not stop their recognition of each other as brethren, along with their co-operation and concern for each other, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, *'Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.'*

Individual churches *should be* largely united in their understanding of the scriptures, Amos 3:3, *'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?'*, but we should not dwell on our small differences with other groups if that prevents a more effective preaching *of what we share*.

We can forget that all who truly follow Jesus Christ are linked together as the branches of the vine, John 15:4-5,8, *'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.... 8Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.'* **Christ expects us to follow His instructions to the end time Church** (see the End Time tab). The fact that some may differ in understanding on very minor points of doctrine should not prevent our best efforts to warn this world of what lies ahead and the need to repent.

Who knows, it may be with more familiarity and the help of God's Holy Spirit, that some of those differences may disappear, but it is important for true Christians to downplay *slight* differences and stress their agreement to the benefit of the commission which Christ gave to His Church. Once God sees our desire to flee idolatry **and put that calling foremost**, to wholeheartedly pursue the preaching of the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God, He is more concerned with what's in our hearts than whether or not we are correct in the minutiae of our belief on any particular doctrine.

God can always correct our genuine misunderstandings, and we all have them, but He cannot provide the diligent and determined faith to follow His revealed will and clearly expressed instructions in His word. Only we can do that.

So, like Elijah, let's put aside selfish insularity, remember our commission, and not be afraid to contact each other to find out how we can become more profitable servants of our Lord. After all, the time is soon coming when we will need to work together in Jerusalem!

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