

# Church of God, The Eternal

P.O. Box 775  
Eugene, Oregon 97440

## What Is "The Work"?—Part I

March 1979

Dear Brethren:

A very warm and special greetings to all, for the month of March. Our prayers and thoughts are with you continually. We truly hope that all are being blessed, both spiritually and physically.

Never before has the reality of uncertainty, distrust, and outright fear been more apparent. Conditions deteriorate faster and faster, on the domestic as well as the international plane. Again, the urgency of Paul's instruction—"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"—is more meaningful and timely than ever.

Despite all this obvious turmoil and difficulty in the world, too many people are yet troubled with spiritual areas which affect their faith and purpose. It is certainly time that we apply ourselves with a purpose and resolve never heretofore evidenced in our lives. And that resolve must be the firming up of faith—for, the just shall live by faith. You cannot wait and hope to see physical evidence before acting in a positive manner. If you make such a mistake, you will be left with only one option: experiencing the severity of the Tribulation, by which you can purify your spiritual robes and make them white. How much better to believe and trust the truth which God initially gave! No other premise will produce faith. For, faith comes as a gift from God—as a result of the original call and the gift of the Holy Spirit. That faith was once delivered and must be kept active and alive by consistent usage.

As an aid to all who are struggling with themselves and do desire to be faithful to God, we have elected to make clear the conception of a "work." So many have been deeply concerned about this. In the next two or three *Monthly Letters*, the whole subject of "work" will be covered. For your own good, make sure you study the material carefully, pray faithfully and fervently to God, and be honest with yourself. In so doing, you cannot escape the facts recorded, for our admonition and learning, in the Bible—the Word of God.

May your study be encouraging, helpful, inspirational, and rewarding.

## **"The Work": Basis of Faith, or Cause of Faithlessness?**

During 1973–74, church doctrine was changed. Lifestyles were altered. Morality and decency vanished from the confines of the Church of God of the last days. Yet, all these doctrinal changes and conditions were accepted, albeit reluctantly by some, because of an enslavement to the concept of "the Work." Doctrine—the Truth of God, once revealed to the chosen ones—was no longer the basis of judgment or evaluation of right and wrong. Individual responsibility and faithfulness to the true way of life were not important. What counted was "the Work." "The Work" became the basis of all judgment and the determination of right and wrong.

Members were expected to compromise belief—predicated on revealed doctrine—in order that they might continue in the confines of *the physical church*, the Church of God, because of the necessity of "doing the Work." Further, even the entire concept of the Work changed. Yet, the *reinterpretation* of the Work, even if uniquely different from every concept of a work mentioned in the Bible, was categorically accepted by a deceived and gullible laity—and, tragically, by the ministry as well.

Are works or activities of God? If so, how is it possible that an activity ordained of God can be so dramatically abused? How can an honorable commission or responsibility—imposed by God upon His called and chosen servants, whom He had enlightened by the original truth—have become an "idol" which these very people are now taught to bow before and worship? A mystery, indeed! But, tragically, history reveals this transition occurred more than once. For the cause of salvation and required faithfulness to the way of God, it is imperative that we thoroughly understand the whole fabric of the subject under consideration.

God has been the author of many different "works," during the history of man on this earth. And as we shall later understand, He imposed various limitations with respect to times and conditions of those works. But first, let us briefly review the chronicle of works throughout the history of mankind—beginning with the personal work of God Himself.

### **The Personal Work of God**

God works! He is a very busy and energetic Being. Though we cannot see Him with the physical eye, His activity influences our very existence daily—whether we are called and chosen to understand the Truth or are yet unconverted human beings of the world, living according to the dictates of the carnal mind and the flesh.

God the Father is the Creator of the physical universe—though this creation was done through the one who became the Christ (Gen. 2:2–3; Ps. 8:1–6; Ps. 102:25). He is the Sustainer and Controller of that vast physical universe (Ps. 148:1–14; Heb. 1:3; Matt. 5:45). He calls, selects, and establishes human beings according to His foundational plan (Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26; Rom. 9:17–19; Rom. 11; Rom. 16:25–26; Eph. 3:3–13). In accord with that plan and purpose, He intervenes, protects, blesses, and aids His own chosen ones (Ex. 14:31; Ex. 34:10; Judges 2:7; Matt. 7:7–12). He also punishes, chastises, and corrects human beings when necessary (Dan. 9:14; Lev. 26; Deut. 28). Further, God is the Creator of spiritual character and divine nature—the nature with which He is endowed (2 Pet. 1:1–5; Eph. 2:10; Ph'p. 3:21; Job 14:15; Isa. 64:1–8; Rom. 9:27–28; Ph'p. 1:6). *He* is the Legislator and Ruler of that perfection (Ex. 32:16; Deut. 32:4; Heb. 1:1–2). And finally, with the many other works He performs which could be mentioned, He is the Performer of prophetic works (Isa. 5:19; Isa. 10:12; Isa. 29:13–16; Hab. 1:5).

The works and purposes of God are known to Him only—until He elects to reveal them. He knows the end of all things from the beginning. He comprehends all purposes (Acts 15:18). Man at the present cannot understand the total purpose of God, but only what God purposes to reveal to him (Eccl. 3:11). Man cannot change that purpose—a purpose established from the foundation of the world (Eccl. 7:13; 8:17). Though man cannot change the purposes of God, he can have implicit confidence in them—because the work of God is consistent, right, and honorable. *He does not change*. His way and purpose remain the same, from the beginning to the end.

### **Satan Works, Too!**

Created as a brilliant, intelligent, and purposeful being, Lucifer was given awesome responsibility—a work of major magnitude. He had authority, position, and power!

But he reasoned, "Why should I be subservient to any other being—even to my Creator, God?" Because of his vanity and pride, he was lifted up in his own mind. He rebelled and pulled one third of all angelic beings from their work of service, love, and harmony. A work that directly affects all humankind.

Because he became an adversary, Lucifer's name was changed to Satan the Devil. He is in constant opposition to God's intent and purpose. He works diligently to sway, deceive, and destroy all humankind—the potential children of God.

Though he rebelled, Satan has not been removed from his present office of position and power. He continues to work—now in defiance of God, whereas he once was obedient, teachable, and honorable in effort and purpose.

In Ezekiel 28:12–15 and Isaiah 14:12–14, we see that Lucifer had awesome power and responsibility—yet, he turned from *the way of life*, becoming disobedient and resisting the will of God. He, with all the angels under him, had been given the responsibility of serving God's human creation (Heb. 1:13–14); angels were to be ministering (SERVING) spirits to those called for salvation. Instead, however, he organized the growing human population to turn against God (Luke 4:5–8; Matt. 4:4–11; 2 Cor. 4:4).

His work is a work of opposition. He invariably tries, attempts to deceive, and sometimes changes the direction of God's chosen instruments (Matt. 4:4–11; 2 Thess. 2:1–15). The most vulnerable people of all are those who have been called of God but do not recognize the activities of Satan and do not daily seek direction of God. Satan is most wrathful, seditious, and hateful. The called of God are his primary target.

Yes, he works—WORKS daily, incessantly, unrelentingly, to destroy (Rev. 16:14). And many unwittingly do his will, completely unaware of their evil source of energy, strength, and help (Matt. 7:21–23).

Satan's work is an ever-present reminder that any servant of God *can* defect—and that even though that servant may continue exercising his same office of power and responsibility, he has become an adversary of the Truth. Only by evaluating his original intent and purpose—using the unchanging yardstick of God's divinely revealed Truth—can the enlightened properly judge and evaluate. This is a very serious and sobering responsibility, incumbent upon every chosen vessel of God.

A Work of God remains a Work of God only if it continues unaltered in its original purpose, to its conclusion. Any change which alters the plan and purpose of God is a signal, to those spiritually alert—a signal for significant and meaningful evaluation (Deut. 13:1–4; 1 John 4:1–3; 1 Cor. 11:9).

## **Works From Adam to Moses**

God, the Creator of all, has from time to time given specific "works" to chosen men. And when God chooses these men, He gives the message and/or duty and imposes necessary limitations.

To Adam—who typifies all mankind—He gave the garden in Eden as a custodial charge. The beautiful and productive earth which God had created—the domicile of man, whom He had created—was not created in a static condition. It had to be maintained—pruned, cultivated, and kept clean from all foreign growth. This charge was given man (Gen. 2:9, 15–17). Now, after nearly 6,000 years have elapsed, it is quite apparent man has not judiciously and intelligently assumed that God-given responsibility. As a result, the very physical, natural world—which was created to be subservient to man—will curse him and become a large source of disobedient man's punishment, in the closing years of this age allotted to man.

Many years later, God gave a WORK to Noah (Gen. 5:29; 6:5–14, 18, 22; 9:1–7, 11–17). The message, terms, and conditions were made clear to His chosen servant. The responsibility incumbent upon Noah was to remain faithful to all conditions imposed by God.

Then, approximately 430 years after the Flood, God called Abraham. A very meaningful work, for all humanity, was given to him (Gen. 12:1–4; Gen. 15:1–18; Gen. 17:1–14; Rom. 4:13). Abraham was faithful. He did not change or alter the responsibility given to him. And as a result, he became the father of the faithful. To be acclaimed faithful to the commission of God is the highest honor and recognition which can be given to any called servant. It seems that few, indeed, can or will be faithful. The carnal mind of vanity and arrogance deceives and misleads most.

And many more years later, another specially called, trained, and commissioned servant began a Work of God. Moses, a type of Christ, diligently and energetically performed the work which God had given to him. He led the Children of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 2:11–14; 3:10; 6:13). He was the intermediary of God for the *first covenant* (Ex. 12, 13; 25:22). The Truth of God—the way of life for us, today (Heb. 4:2)—was delivered to Moses. He was responsible for delivering this same Truth to the people. Using the new national constitution—the way of peace, life, and prosperity—Moses judged and ruled the people (Ex. 18). And Moses was faithful to the charge which God had given him (Heb. 3:2).

### **Works From Prophets to Christ**

The prophets, as a called and select group, were commissioned by God to perform very specific works (2 Pet. 1:20–21; Heb. 1:1; Matt. 23:29–35).

Isaiah was given a work by God. Jeremiah had a very special work to perform. Ezekiel was greatly inspired of God—inspired to fulfill the purpose for which God had chosen him. To that list could be added Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and all the others. God detailed the work each was commissioned to fulfill and then held him accountable for faithful performance.

Just before Christ began His work, John the Baptist was sent with a message. He was tendered a WORK (Matt. 3:1–3; Isa. 40:3; Matt. 11:1–13; Mal. 3:1). And John was faithful to that responsibility, choosing to give up life rather than to compromise.

## **The Work of Jesus Christ**

Jesus Christ did not come to earth of His own will. The Father sent Him (John 4:34; 5:30, 36; 7:16; 8:42). The words He was to speak were given to Him (John 12:49–50). Further, His uncompromising faithfulness, in the work of proclaiming and fulfilling the Word which God gave to Him, is the proof of His responsibility—it witnesses in His behalf (John 5:36). The scope of His work is made plain in Luke 4:16–22. And, Jesus Christ was completely oriented to the fulfillment of that charge received from the Father (John 4:34). As the Father works, so does Jesus (John 5:17). But as we shall see later, there are limitations imposed upon any servant to whom a work is given. So it was in the life of Jesus Christ (John 17:1–4; Matt. 15:24).

The work done by any human servant, *chosen and commissioned* by God, always begins as the *Work of God*. But that servant must be faithful and energetic (John 9:1–5). What, then, is the Work of God? Jesus, in His own life and practice, made the concept of that work very clear (John 6:28–38). It is finalized in *the total belief of Jesus*: a belief of the Gospel, which is the Truth—the Word of God. Christ was that Word, personified in His own fleshly body (John 1:14). The same applies today. The Church of God is the Body of Christ—the embodiment of the same, unchangeable Word, in the composite lives of the members.

## **Works of the Apostolic Era**

Christ was commissioned by God to fulfill a specific work. A definite hour was foreordained as the appointed time for the conclusion of that work. Did God's work cease as of that appointed hour? If not, who was authorized to continue a work? And what was the specific nature of that subsequent work?

During the time of Christ's work, He called, taught, and trained disciples in the way of life. He instructed them relative to their future responsibility. And at the predetermined time—the time of Christ's death—the disciples (who, by virtue of their commission, became the apostles) were sent forth to preach the Word. Jesus Christ prayed: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). As the commissioned apostles, sent to the world, what message were they to carry to the people to whom they were sent? (See John 17:17). It was the Word—the unchanging Word of which Jesus was the physical manifestation in the flesh (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1–3). The commission is made clear in Matthew 28:19–20. The apostles were held accountable for proclaiming the same words Jesus lived, manifested in His fleshly body, and taught (verse 20).

The apostles were commissioned to do a work (Mark 16:20). It was a work which was not destined to be any more accepted by the populace than was the endeavor of Jesus Christ, Himself! Concerning the combined activity of the apostles, Gamaliel—a learned man of the Pharisee sect—advised: ". . . Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38–39).

What counsel! History abundantly and clearly reveals that as long as the called and true ministry was loyal and faithful to the Word given, the work grew and was greatly successful. However, when the ministry apostatized from the way of life and changed the revealed doctrine, the work fell into chaos and hurtful disruption. Truly, God allowed their work to come to a conclusion. Then, as a mere human endeavor, men welded the pieces back together, completely altered the original truth, and began to grow powerful and influential in the sphere of the world.

Several years after the call and commission of the original twelve apostles, God chose Saul of Tarsus to be trained and equipped for a work (Acts 9:10–16). In time, instruction was given for him to be separated unto the work for which God had called him (Acts 13:1–3). As the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reveals, the work given to the specially selected servant of God, Paul, was a fulfillment of Habakkuk 1:5 (Acts 13:38–43).

What was the proof of Paul's apostleship? It was the very fact the *Truth* was taught through him, and the people responded obediently to that message (1 Cor. 9:1–2). God had separated the Apostle Paul from the other apostles, for him to carry the Gospel message to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Rom. 15:16; Acts 9:15; Gal. 2:8). The Gentiles had come to the knowledge of the Truth through the preaching of the Apostle Paul. And Paul taught the message to the Gentiles because he was *directly commissioned* by God.

As long as a servant of God is faithful to the work of proclaiming the Gospel—which cannot be changed, because it is revealed by God—those called through the work of that chosen instrument of God must bear their responsibility (1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10). The work of God is spiritual in nature. It is the call, conversion, and spiritual growth of the people whom God has chosen. The minister, as a servant of God, must do his part.

But on the other hand, the people must fulfill their own individual parts—mastering and perfecting themselves. *All* called of God are involved in the Work of God. Each has a specific responsibility. Any assumption or failure, on the part of any party within the framework of that responsibility, is disapproved by God. As Paul was faithful to the heavenly vision given him, so each of us must recognize his charge and faithfully perform it unto the day of Christ.

### **Only One Work in the Last Days?**

There are Biblical indications of several *different* works in the last days. God is not limited or restricted. According to historical examples recorded in the Bible, God has simultaneously used different servants for different purposes and in different areas. Since the immediate application of Matthew 28:19–20 and Mark 16:14–18 was the commission to the twelve original apostles, it is quite obvious that its fulfillment was not limited to a single individual. Therefore, the texts referring to a work in the last days—from the commencement of the commission to the Second Coming of Christ—cannot be limited to a single individual.

First, let us note the general indications of a work in the last days:

1) Habakkuk was inspired to write: "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you" (Hab. 1:5). This verse had a typical fulfillment in the days of the apostles (Acts 13:41). But, since the events of old are examples of instruction for us upon whom the last days are come, the basic fulfillment is in our time (1 Cor. 10:6, 11; 1 Pet. 1:10–12).

2) Moses blessed the Children of Israel. Of Levi (who must be present today, since the literal fulfillment of Deuteronomy 33 is in the last days), he wrote:

Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the

waters of Meribah; Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again (Deut. 33:8–11).

Please compare this with the book of Malachi. This is, without doubt, a last-day prophecy.

3) Jesus Christ stated, before His ascension:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with *you* [whom?] always, even unto the end of the world. . . (Matt. 28:19–20).

The end (consummation) of the world (age) is synonymous with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:1–3). That work is of God (Mark 16:20).

4) Jesus stated, also: "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" (Matt. 24:14). The very context of this verse makes it clear that the fulfillment of this responsibility is achieved miraculously. Violence, threats, and human weaknesses—which the Bible indicates are coming—will render the fulfillment impossible, except for the powerful intervention of God.

5) The work of God relates to our call and requirement of personal mastery. God is the author of the spiritual organization by which this work is accomplished (Eph. 4:11–13). The conclusion of this work will be at the return of Jesus Christ. Also, the work is a joint effort between God and His called and chosen servants (2 Cor. 6:1–2). Every chosen subject, then, is called and trained for some responsibility (1 Cor. 12:6).

The general examples above make plain, to those who comprehend, the necessity and fulfillment of a work in the last days. The specific works ordained of God are as follow:

1) *Elijah to Come*: Malachi wrote:

Behold, I [God] will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts (Mal. 3:1).

Though this prophecy had a typical fulfillment in the preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:7–14), its ultimate prophetic intent must be the work of someone just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Verses 2–6 of Malachi 3 cannot refer to any other time—for, most assuredly, they have not yet come to pass. This is made clear by comparing Malachi 4:5. We read: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The Day of the Lord, as made plain by many other texts, includes a brief period of time which leads up to the Second Coming of Christ.

2) *The Two Witnesses*: A message is commissioned and a very specific work bequeathed to two individuals chosen by God (Rev. 11:1–12). This work immediately precedes the Second Coming of Christ, as does the work of Elijah. However, a careful comparison of the two responsibilities makes it virtually impossible for the one to be a part of the other. If both works were fulfilled by the same individuals, why is there a mention of the two distinct responsibilities? All duties could have been detailed under the charge of the ONE work to be performed. However, the work of the end-time Elijah is significantly different from that performed by the two witnesses. Forced interpretations of those responsibilities, or assumption on the part of anyone, will not alter the intent and purpose of God. In His own time, He will commission the responsible individuals to carry out these works. Those with right spirits and hearts will see, know, and understand. Let us patiently wait for God. He is awesomely capable.

3) *Israel in Captivity* (The physical nation or spiritual Israel—which?): Ezekiel, a major prophet of God, spoke for our time. He was inspired to write about a time when Israel would encounter grave difficulties—because of her

people's unfaithfulness to mission, purpose, and call. As a result of this rebellion and defiance, they *are* to be sent into captivity. And in captivity, because they will no longer have the self-image and a feeling of superiority, they will be able to objectively evaluate their condition. The severity of the persecution in captivity will ensure this objective outlook. Realizing the reasons for their captivity, they will address themselves to these causes. They will proclaim the Truth of God to all with whom they have contact (Ezek. 6:8–14). By their captivity, they will again come to KNOW God (verse 9). They will repent of having turned from the true God to their vile abominations.

To KNOW God is to know and practice His *Law* and *Way* of life. John, the apostle, made this point plain (1 John 2:4). So, Ezekiel was speaking of a people who had departed from God. That is, they once knew Him but subsequently departed. In captivity, they will come to understand logically the causes of their difficulties. Remembering those reasons, repenting of their apostasy, and turning back to God, they will proclaim that way of life to others. Indeed, a major work—of worldwide magnitude—is suggested, since the Bible makes it clear these captives will be dispersed into all parts of the world.

4) *The Angels of God*: Evil will stalk the entire earth. The handful of Christians—those who truly walk in the footsteps of Christ—will be sequestered, because of unbelievable atrocities against Truth and against any who elect to believe and practice that way of life. Of necessity, powerful and supernatural intervention by God will be mandated. This time, God will use the angels to proclaim the Truth and universally to indict human beings involved in the nefarious, vile, wicked, and destructive work of Satan the Devil (Rev. 14:6–20). Out of this devastating time of trouble, many will be purified and made righteous before God (Rev. 7:1–17).

These commissioned angels will perform a marvelous work, in their appointed time. Those angels who refused to subscribe to the defiant spirit of Lucifer—now Satan the Devil—will faithfully perform their work as the ministering servants to those men who have yielded to God's awesome purpose (Heb. 1:13–14). The work will be finished in a miraculous manner. Angels, who are not subject to influences and limitations of man, will perform a major work in the last days.

Fallen angels (demons) have been given certain powers over man. They cannot compel, coerce, or force human beings—but they can silently and

mentally *influence* them. Between angelic and demonic motivations, however, there is a 180-degree difference in the direction of mind and heart. The influence of Satan is manifested in rivalry, rebelliousness, inflexibility or unteachableness, self-righteousness, defiance against government or rule, bad feelings, and contention. Whereas, the Spirit of God is manifested in peace, love, tolerance, kindness, responsiveness, teachableness, exercise of faith, and control of self. What a difference! No one can miss the mark while effecting an honest, personal examination of his own life. And apart from God, only the individual has a right to judge himself.

As the superpowers (spirit beings) influence humankind today, by dealing in an indirect manner—so the angels of God will audibly, and perhaps visibly, deal with humanity in the future. Their message will be powerful. Quite possibly, there will be a *Satanic counterpart*, in manifestations of a most *diabolical magnitude*. Are we equipped to make the necessary judgments in those days of supernatural intervention? Not all people are going to recognize the difference.

### **Christ's Last Three-and-one-Half Years**

The preceding does indicate the magnitude of God's work—in relationship to human beings, potential children of God—to be performed in the last days, the times which lie just ahead. Several servants of God, including angels, will be involved in this gigantic "Work of God." The world is going to KNOW it has been spoken to, when God finishes His predetermined "WORK"—the infinitesimal "works" and antics of men notwithstanding. And then, according to a prophetically indicated time sequence, God will finish that work at the return of His own Son, whom He will send back to the earth (Acts 3:19–21). From all Biblical indications, Christ must yet fulfill three and one-half years of His appointed seven-year ministry or work (Dan. 9:27). Since He was cut off in the middle of that appointed time, it may be logically assumed that the other three and one-half years are yet to be fulfilled.

This time, Christ will not come as a meek, humble man, for the suffering of death. He will come in great glory and power—as a conquering King. He will subjugate powerfully every nation on the face of the earth. And this activity of Christ is preparatory to the establishment of the Millennium. See Revelation, the 19th chapter.

With several major works having been wrought in the last days, culminating in the Second Coming of Christ and His own personal, worldwide work, the earth has at last been made ready for a new educational program—the universal restoration of God's true way of life (Acts 3:19–21) which was long maligned, ridiculed, perverted, and counterfeited by men. This next significant work is the millennial labor of Christ and His co-workers.

## **The Millennium**

Christ will be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. He will be ruler over all the earth—empowered to perform a work of total restoration. With Him, on His throne, will be those who overcame and qualified to rule (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 2:26–27).

The Spirit of God is made abundantly available to those who live into the beginning of the Millennium—specifically, to the Children of Israel (Ezek. 36:25–38). The Gentile nations will also come to KNOW God—meaning they will be called and converted (verse 36). Isaiah makes the *universality* of this call and response plain (Isa. 11:1–16).

The work of Christ during the Millennium will render all previous works insignificant. There will be a world knowledgeable of God's one and only true way of life. The archenemy of mankind will be banished into exile—rendered impotent in his deceptive and influential ambitions.

The earth will be at rest. All efforts will be oriented constructively. Generation after generation will build upon the accomplishments of previous generations. The trend will be a constant appreciation—not a downhill depreciation, as has been evident for almost 6,000 years in our society (Jer. 7:23–24).

Imagine the combined, *constructive* efforts of mankind—efforts directed toward *benefitting* mankind! The earth, even today, is breathtakingly beautiful in many areas, regardless of man's 6000-year abuse. What will it be like when humankind cooperates with all the beneficent laws of nature? Truly, the millennial Work of God will be a most rewarding one. May God hasten the day for that opportunity!

## **The Final Judgment**

Thousands have died, in times past, never having heard or understood the Truth of God. They lived blindly, in the natural pursuits of carnal desire. They certainly are not now

qualified to inherit the Kingdom of God. There are literally billions of them! Are they all lost—without hope of life?

Of course not! The plan of God unfolds a step at a time. Only a small few will be prepared to enter the Kingdom of God at the time of Christ's Second Coming. They are the ones who, through lives of trial and experience during the past 6,000 years, have qualified to sit with Christ on His throne. They are fellow laborers with God and Christ. But also, there are those who—without a Satan roaming about to devour and deceive—will qualify during the Millennium by comparable trials and experiences, mastering the carnal self. These will be added, and become co-laborers with God in the greatest endeavor of all—which will occur during the short time allocated to the multitudes resurrected *after* the Millennium. That time is often referred to as "The Great White Throne Judgment" (Rev. 20:12). Read the whole 20th chapter of Revelation, and you will see the sequence of events.

Revelation 20:11–12 relates a physical resurrection. Since the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4–6; 1 Cor. 15:12–54; 1 Thess. 4:13–18) is to a spirit state, the resurrection referred to in the latter part of Revelation 20 and in Ezekiel 37:1–14 cannot also relate to that first resurrection. The only other resurrection to which it can refer is at the end of the Millennium—the resurrection of all physical human beings to whom will be given a first opportunity for eternal life (Rev. 20:12).

What a work! It will be a time of major unlearning! A time when humanity, physically resurrected, will know nothing other than what they believed, practiced, thought, or "knew" just before physical death. Merely being resurrected will not make them automatically responsive and teachable. They will bring back with them—from the grave—all their old resentments, attitudes, beliefs, contempt, and abject carnality. It will require the powerful and supernatural intervention of God to change minds and hearts. Then, through the crucible of trial and experience, the required character will begin to emerge as the years pass.

To cope with these billions, there will be the earlier groups in whom God has developed, step by step, the character of perfection. Having been born into the Family of God, these spirit beings will now become co-laborers with God and Christ in training and teaching those resurrected subsequently.

This activity, following the Millennium, will be the last great work—as we presently understand the world and the existence of humanity. Obviously, there is some significant responsibility that lies beyond the veil of the tangible present. But as to what that work may be, we have little insight. One text, Isaiah 9:6–7, gives a fleeting light of expectancy: ". . . Of

the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end . . ." Nothing definitive is revealed. We must patiently wait for the revelation of God.

## The Premise of All Work

Major works have been wrought, by God and Christ, through human instruments. These works have occurred, in varying degrees and at different times, through the whole chronicle of human existence. The existence and proof of such works is incontrovertible. No called and enlightened servant of God can deny that fact.

Yet, there is equally ample evidence that *man's conception of God's work* has led to change and perversion. For, any specific work of God cannot be separated from the one, underlying, spiritual purpose of God—the call of human beings effecting a conversion (change of heart and mind) and the development of character (the divine nature of God). Too frequently, chosen servants have attempted to bypass the requisite of the change of human nature, putting *undue* emphasis upon the fulfillment of a "work" which is devoid of the basic requirement—character.

Where eyes have been fixed upon the responsibility of a "work," they have generally been stripped of God's primary objective, so that loyalty to organization or man has become tantamount to idolatry. God will not accept, initially or subsequently, any work which effaces or misconstrues His real purpose.

Let us thoroughly understand these concepts.

Man was created carnal, of the flesh—of the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7; Rom. 7:14; Rom. 8:20). But he was created to *master* his own nature and to *put on the nature of God* (Gen. 4:7, *RSV*, and Rom. 7; compared to 2 Pet. 1:3–9). However, men do not have the option of selecting arbitrarily the true way of life. They must be *called by God* and *given the necessary help* (Matt. 13:11–17; Rom. 11:1–8; John 6:44, 65). This whole process is called the Work of God (John 6:29). *That work is a daily operation of God in our lives*—effecting the required change of heart and mind and the production of sterling, unalterable character (Ph'p. 1:6; Ph'p. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:19; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:21). This ultimate objective is made most clear by God through the Apostle Paul (Ph'p. 3:21). The production of that character—nature of God—is borne mutually by God and His called servants, with whom He works (Col. 1:29; Ps. 95:9). The power to enable man to effectively perform is provided by God—it is the power of the Holy Spirit, by which Christ lives within us (Eph. 3:7).

Since this responsibility is mutually borne, and God as a wise masterbuilder provides the strength required for effective human performance, we are critically and comprehensively evaluated and judged on performance (Ps. 62:12; 1 Pet. 1:17; Eph. 1:11). Such judgment, of itself, requires evaluation of *individual* performance. This evaluation must not be limited to *collective activity*. Being a part of an organization, designed to perform some preconceived idea, is not adequate for a favorable pronouncement from God. For, the *production of character* is indispensable to the fulfillment of any call and work God gives. This is why all servants of God are *individually* rewarded (Rev. 22:12).

Of course, collective oneness is required by God. But that oneness is not primarily by confinement and limits of organization. It is oneness of heart, mind, and character. Thus, it is obvious that those who have developed individual character will be welded together into the oneness of the Body of Jesus Christ. They will be united in a physical oneness NOW.

The contrast between man's efforts—regardless of how profound and believable they may be—and that of God is found in the book of Proverbs 11:18–19. Christ said: "By their fruits you shall know them." The conclusion is this: If the fruits (works) of a man's life are not righteous and honorable, open and readable (manifest) before God and the children of God, he is suspect and is NOT fulfilling God's purpose in his life.

In a physical sense, God has used Gentile nations and peoples—those not fulfilling His Law and way of life—to accomplish a certain limited work. If we understand Isaiah 10:5–7 correctly, He will use Assyria to punish Israel in the days just ahead. He did use Nebuchadnezzar to punish Judah. He used Cyrus of Persia to fulfill a specific purpose. However, there is no example where God ever used a rebellious people to accomplish His *spiritual* purpose. Such usage would generate mockery and disbelief of the very way being taught. To be WITNESSES of God's work and way requires implicit obedience. For this very reason, He called and trained twelve apostles. He later called and specifically trained the Apostle Paul. These men were *obedient*. They were witnesses by *word* and *life*. The one was not in conflict with the other.

God performs marvelous works. He has done so throughout all ages. He often has used human instruments to accomplish those works. But invariably, God has imposed very specific and well-defined limitations to those works—limitations upon those servants called and sent. We must understand these limitations and just how they apply to us in our time.

## Limitations Imposed Upon All Work

God alone knows the end from the beginning. He knows the times appointed for all things. And when men become *presumptive*, they lose God's blessings, guidance, and inspiration. Mistakes will be made. Men simply cannot *force* the fulfillment of God's plan or purpose. God alone calls, appoints, and commissions. Therefore, all men would do well to patiently wait for the direction of God—whether through revelation, directly or indirectly through angels, or through vision or dream. He is powerful and possesses *all capability* so that *He* can let men know His will. No man has to second-guess God in any effort to determine that will.

All who are called of God know that He has established times for work and rest. Relative to the week, God said man was to work six days and rest the seventh day (Ex. 20:9–10; Deut. 5:13–14; Jer. 17:22, 24). Concerning the year, God ordained and appointed Holy Days on which man is forbidden to work—yearly days, set apart to be kept in addition to the seventh day of the week (Lev. 23:1–40; Deut. 16:8). In these two instances, He commanded both the work and the rest. Reason—if nothing else—indicates specific *limitations* inherent in the mutuality of the two commands. The seven-day week pictures the 7,000-year plan of God, which relates to man's purpose on this earth. As the six days at the beginning of the week picture the time for man's own work, so does the seventh day picture the time of man's rest from his own labors and the direct intervention of God in the affairs of men.

An "appointed time" has, intrinsically, a specific beginning and an obviously predetermined ending. Events and circumstances are *not* happenstance, with God. He specifically established times and seasons (Ps. 104:19; Gen. 1:14–15; Ps. 19:1–4; Ps. 148:1–5). And, those times speak loud and clear to all who understand. The physical type reveals the spiritual will and purpose of God (Rom. 1:20; John 9:4). Therefore, considering the precision of the 7,000-year plan of God, is it sensible to think that other events and plans of God occur with less precision and purpose?

Inherent in any commission or responsibility are very specific and absolute limitations—limitations which God made abundantly clear to every servant whose mission is recorded in the Bible. And, that which is recorded is written for our admonition and learning. We must understand these examples and apply them to our times.

The obvious limitations indicated in the Bible, with respect to a commission, are time, geography, peoples, message, and length of responsibility. These must be understood. These limitations will be considered and analyzed, one at a time.

## The Limitation of Time

God is a Master Planner. Events of significance have been scheduled from the beginning of time. And, the unfolding of that awesome plan has transpired right on schedule. God is no different than any well-organized executive. In fact, He is the perfect example of purpose, scheduling, and fulfillment. Man's finite efforts are often disrupted, because he does not take into account his own inherent limitations of power and capability. Such limitations are not impediments to God.

God alone knows the times and seasons determined for all things. He has determined the bounds and times of all nations of the earth (Acts 17:26; Deut. 32:7–9; Isa. 44:5–8; Acts 1:6–7; Hab. 2:3). And those events, conditions, and circumstances remain hidden with Him until He wills to reveal them to man (same texts as mentioned above).

Within the structure of man's existence, there are the obvious allocations of a time of joy, a time of grief, a time to plant, a time to reap, and a time for nearly every endeavor or expression known to that lowly being (Eccl. 3:1–17; 8:6). But, beyond that inherent limitation is one of greater significance and meaning. Man, himself, is allocated only so much time upon this earth—a time to use constructively and wisely or to spend idly, abusively, and destructively (Job 7:1; 14:14).

The allocation of time is unalterable. It is scheduled and predetermined by God. The antics and aspirations of "intelligent" man—regardless of plans, hopes, and dreams—will not change the conditions and purposes which God foreordained. A part of the very Truth of God involves these times and conditions. They cannot be changed (Jer. 50:44).

As indicated earlier, man of himself cannot know the times appointed by God (Mark 13:33). Yet, at predetermined times, God will make known to certain men an understanding of events which are to transpire (Dan. 12:4, 9–10). The wise—those chosen of God—are the ones to whom God will reveal this knowledge. All others are mere pawns, moved upon the chessboard of life by circumstance.

For proof of the above premise, let us note just a few of the events specifically scheduled:

a) *Israel's Time of Difficulty*: In God's own time, Israel was formed into a nation. Though that nation became the recipient of the priceless Truth of God, its people were inclined to wickedness and evil. As a result, they were expelled from the land which had been promised to them. As an honest evaluation of the true history of the ancient past will

reveal, Israel was scattered abroad and was never again heard from in that part of the world. Yet, they do exist in the last days—for they are the recipients, once again, of terrible punishment and censor by God. The time of that difficulty—trouble—is specifically determined. Then, at the conclusion of that difficult period of time, they will be restored to their promised inheritance—under the salutary guidance and direction of David, then resurrected to immortality (Ezek. 7:1–15).

b) *End of Man's Allotted Time*: Man was created and given dominion over the physical earth which God had created. He has been allocated just so much time, before being required to give an accounting of his custodial responsibility (Dan. 8:17, 19; 11:27, 35).

c) *Punishment of Fallen Angels*: Angels—which were created for the purpose of serving those who are destined, by mastery of self (overcoming), to become the children of God—did not possess static natures. They were forced, by circumstance and knowledge, to make decisions relevant to their futures and the direction of service rendered. Some rebelled against the will of God—they willed to make the wrong decision. As rebellious spirit beings, they elected to become the adversaries of God and man. However, in the appointed time, God has willed that they should be judged by those whom they were required to serve (Matt. 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6). The demons understood the time appointed for this judgment. The implications are clear that they were attempting to accuse Christ of violating the allotted time. They should have been aware that the times and seasons appointed by God could not be altered.

A wrong spirit will always attempt to pervert truth and purposes. This is the basis of insidious afterthought—the "could it have been," "maybe," or "I never thought of that before." Second-guessing invariably renders a disservice to those involved. God's Word cannot be broken. We must learn to take it at face value—to believe with our whole hearts and minds, to have implicit faith. Some ministers, who ought to know better, behave in exactly the same way the false religionists of Daniel's day did. They use the element of mystery—inspired by the demons mentioned above, in spite of a lack of specific revelation relevant to absolute prophecies of the Bible—to mesmerize and deceive the masses. By this system of perversion and deception, the people, gullibly swayed, can be led to believe almost anything.

God means precisely what He says—as recorded in the Bible. In His own appointed time, He will make known to His chosen servants those things He wills for them to know and understand. Christians must be careful not to be influenced by those powers, unseen, which would pervert our understanding and compel us—by our own vanity and desire—to *force* prophetic explanations and false fulfillments. For, the real events recorded by God

will not happen until He wills, all false attempts notwithstanding. A day of judgment is appointed, both for those wrongly influenced—involved in deception and perversion—and for those forces or powers which are doing the influencing. The demons—fallen angels—will be judged. And so will everyone who handles the Word of God.

d) *The First Appearance of Christ*: In the beginning was the Word. And that Word was with God the Father. That Word was Christ, living in the flesh almost 2,000 years ago.

The time and circumstances surrounding His first appearance were established by plan and schedule, perhaps several thousand years before the event transpired (Gal. 4:1–4; Heb. 9:10). Christ came at the exact time the plan of God dictated. God knows the end from the beginning. He is Controller of the entire universe. All things work in accord with the will of God. Conceptions, plans, and assumptions of men will not change or alter those plans. And, only those who are called and chosen of God will be given the understanding of those times—*usually at the time of the fulfillment*. There will be no second-guessing, assumptions, or doubts. For, all His plans must be revealed, at appropriate times, to those called to understand. And since God KNOWS the times and seasons appointed for all events—from the beginning to the end—there will be no mistakes. What God reveals is absolute. Therefore, prophetic error on the part of any servant is an obvious indication of presumption. Moses was inspired to make this principle absolutely clear, in Deuteronomy 18:15–22. The standard by which any prophet is judged will be the unalterable Word of God and the implicit *accuracy* of the prophetic announcement. What God reveals *will* come to pass. The first appearance of Christ categorically proves this. He came on schedule, and the people who presumed otherwise were unaware of prophetic fulfillment—though forming a part of the physical body to which He came, as the firstborn of the Church. Physical assumption does not equal spiritual enlightenment. Time will make all things clear. When that happens, shame will cover the faces of the presumptive.

e) *Beginning of the Gospel Message*: Christ came in the time appointed. He grew up to manhood, achieving a significant physical and spiritual awareness during the process. Then, in due time, the circumstances and time were right for the commencement of the Gospel proclamation (Luke 16:16; Mark 1:14–15; Matt. 4:12–17).

Once again, the plan of God dictated. Not that the plan of God dictated to Christ. No, but the animate—namely, the Godhead—blueprinted and scheduled all events according to purpose and will. And, as a result, both the Law and plan of God are absolute and irreversible. To even remotely indicate change in either is to reduce God to the plane of men—a vicious tactic of man's archenemy, the one who influences men into darkness and perversion.

The very fact Christ came according to the foreordained plan and purpose of God is living and inexorable proof that the words and purposes of God are not subject to change—either by time or by the philosophy of men. Both the words—laws, statutes, and judgments—of God and His plan are eternally binding and unalterable. So much so, that the Law and the plan of God took the life of Jesus Christ. The message which He brought, in its appointed time, was the revelation of this very fact. In other words, Christ brought the message of His own impending death.

f) *Sacrifice of Christ Timed*: In the beginning of the last days (Heb. 1:1–2), God spoke to mankind through His own Son, Jesus Christ. He was an apostle of God. He was commissioned to proclaim a specific message: ". . . he [the Father] gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49).

At the appointed time, Christ commenced the proclamation of the Gospel with which He had been entrusted. While it was yet day, He was required to work diligently; for the night was to come, when no man would be able to work. That night pointed forward to a most tragic day, though essential for the salvation of mankind. That day was the appointed day of His death—a death of martyrdom, because of His obedience to the will of God. From the beginning, the schedule of God included the specified time for the death of Christ (Rev. 13:8; Matt. 26:18; John 7:6–8; Rom. 5:6).

The mission and death of Jesus Christ were foretold by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:24–27). Christ did not alter that foreordained plan. On the contrary, He died in conformity to that plan. Once again, the Word had spoken. It is unalterable. It cannot be broken or changed. The words of God are eternal and inexorably binding upon us—if we are the chosen of God to understand, and empowered by God's Holy Spirit to obey.

Christ's life was completely subject to the will and purpose of the Father. He is our perfect example. He came at an appointed time—not the time He might have chosen if He had been inclined to willful behavior. The plan and purpose of God dictated the time He could begin His commissioned work. He was restricted by the limits of the message. And, finally, He was subject to the duration of the responsibility. His time of death was foreordained. At the appointed time, He carried out the complete will of the Father. What an example! He knew the time of the beginning of His work. He understood the constraints of the message—a message which He could not change or alter, for it was of the Father. And He was aware of the time the responsibility would be finished. He made no attempt to alter or change a single factor of His responsibility. There was no uncertainty which clouded plan or purpose. Should any work or activity of God, even today, be any less specific?

g) *Specific Time of Judgment (Trial) upon the Called of God*: The plan and purpose God has for lowly man is awesome. It is so high, exalted, and demanding that gaining Godly acceptance requires ultimate proof. With whatever other requirements God may impose, the ultimate appears to be a specific time of trial. It is a specific time of judgment, appointed by God, which must begin with the House of God (1 Pet. 4:17). In many respects, one may compare this time of trial to the final examination for any scholastic endeavor, the passing of which is required for matriculation. In our case, the final objective is faith. For, only the faithful will inherit the Kingdom of God. And the proof of our faith will be manifested only by accepting that final test requirement.

It is for the above reason, that one called of God will joyously accept each initial step required for proper preparation. Failure, indolence, and indifference, along the path of spiritual responsibility, will make it impossible to pass the final test. God's ways are absolute. There will be no bending, "curving," or "altering" the standard of requirement. Yet, with proper training, preparation all along the life of responsibility will result in confidence and assurance during the final hours of trial and proof.

Has that period of judgment come at this present time? There surely are indications that it has come. Unfortunately, far too many are failing. In such cases, there is a remedial course which entails horrifying experiences. It is called the Tribulation. Far too many would rather delude themselves into a false sense of security, today. But there is a day of reality coming. Deceiving oneself will be of no avail then.

h) *The Appointed Time of the Gentiles*: God has dealt with men on both an individual and a national basis. The truth was initially given to Israel. Both the nations of Judah and Israel rejected that way of life—electing to pursue the way of the Gentiles and thereby become the recipients of the same difficulties which overcame them.

Then, by the will of God, Israel was spiritually blinded, and opportunity was afforded to those Gentiles who lived in abject sin—and who were responsible for having influenced the Israelites into departing from the way of glory, to which God had called them (Rom. 11). The time for the call and conversion of the Gentiles was specifically indicated.

Also, "the times of the Gentiles" indicates a specific time, in the future, during which they will basically influence the activities of the world. During this time of influence, the ultimate purposes and plans of God are held in abeyance. During their time of ascendancy, the Gentiles will create much havoc upon the earth (Luke 21:20–24).

The times and purposes of God are exclusively in *His* power and control. Due to the sins and iniquities of Israel and Judah, God will allow the Gentiles to gain the ascendancy and bring about havoc in the lives of His own chosen people. In exactly the same way, God first granted repentance to the Israelites and Jews—before affording a call to the Gentiles, many years later (see Book of Acts). Times of call, repentance, and fulfillment of purpose all lie within the power and prerogative of God.

Those plans and times cannot be altered or changed. They were foreordained of God. And the final, closing events of our day will unfold in precisely the order and time predetermined by God.

I) *The Time When the Man of Sin Will Be Revealed*: Someone has crept into the true Church of God with ulterior motives. His nefarious and evil activities have eaten away at the very vitals of the Body; yet few, if any, really knew what was taking place. Only in the time appointed by God will this evil and scheming man be revealed. At that time, there is every reason to believe, many of the gullible and unsuspecting flock will be absolutely amazed and shocked at the revelation.

This evil human being is, in all likelihood, the author of the "mystery of iniquity" which is at work within the Body of Christ in the last days. Yet, somehow, his identity is not revealed until the appropriate time as predetermined by God.

Those who can and will escape the wiles and deception of this vile man are those, only, who love and respect *the truth* which God initially gave to them. It is the truth for which they were baptized which will keep them in the way of faith (2 Thess. 2:1–15).

Surely, the time for the revelation of this mysterious man cannot be far removed from us at this present time. All indications are that we presently live in the undulating and foreboding days which will culminate in this horrible event.

j) *The Second Coming of Christ*: All events of the earth would have but little meaning, except in proper context with the fulfillment of this one. Christ, who once lived and walked on this earth as the Son of man, will return to live in power and awesome glory. He will assume the throne for which He has qualified. He will be King of kings and Lord of lords. All those who qualify will take their proper places with Him on His throne.

With Christ's return, the reformation of God's Truth can commence. There will be the restoration of all things on this earth. The restoration of all that has been rendered so disorganized, desolate, and useless because of the vileness of man's activities and the insidious influence of Satan and his demons.

After the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He was received up into heaven—where He must reside until the appointed time of His return (Acts 3:19–21). That return will be the culmination of a long series of events which have looked forward to the final, glorious one. For truly, salvation will then have come to man. It will be a day of new hope, excitement, and reward. And it will transpire at the *exact time* foreordained of God.

The limitation of time is inherent in any activity which God grants. Though the conclusion of a specific work may not be known or understood by most, it is nonetheless terminated. All examples of history make this fact obvious and plain. All the assumption in the world will not change that fact.

### **The Limitation of Geography**

Time is a very specific limiting factor—but at the same time, geography is equally important. Many of the messages which God commissioned to be proclaimed were specified for certain nations. They had nothing to do with other groups of people or nations. On the other hand, some prophecies have to do with all peoples of the earth.

Let us note and evaluate a number of specific examples.

1) *Micah 1:1–2*: The message was given to Micah by the Lord Himself. Specifically, he was commissioned to proclaim the message to Samaria and Jerusalem—which represented, as capitals, the nations of Israel and Judah. On the other hand, the message has an expansive characteristic. For, verse two indicates that the object of the proclamation is the entire earth—all peoples.

2) *Amos 1:1*: The commission of Amos was to the nation of Israel. Chapter three, verse one, says: "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt. . ." Though specifically directed to the nation of Israel, its general application was to the entirety of the people which came up out of the land of Egypt.

3) *Jeremiah 1:1–10*: Jeremiah was given messages directly from God. Those messages had many time limitations and were frequently directed to specific peoples. Yet, in the larger sense, Jeremiah was a prophet chosen of God and commissioned to speak to the nations of the earth. But, the important thing to note is this: Jeremiah was required to speak the words given to him by God, and to speak to the people to whom God sent him. The implied limitations are absolute.

4) *Exodus 3:10*: "Come now therefore, and I will send thee [Moses] unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." The object of this responsibility was singular. It had nothing to do with the people of Moab, Edom, Babylon, or Assyria. The direction of God was that Moses should go to the Pharaoh of Egypt. This was a most precise and unchangeable requirement.

No further texts need be given; but notice that Moses was sent directly to the Pharaoh, a number of different times, with specific words delivered by God. Neither the messages nor the recipient of those messages could be changed.

There are many prophecies in the Bible which were delivered directly to specific nations—they had geographic limitations. When commissioned, the prophet chosen by God was required to deliver a given message to a specific people.

In this context, may it be asked: Why do we automatically assume that any responsibility borne in the latter days continues for all time? Does not all historical evidence indicate the fallacy of this assumption?

### **The Limitation of Peoples**

To some extent, this overlaps the limitation of nations. But, on occasion, the instruction of God was directed specifically to well-defined groups of people. For example, instruction was frequently given to the priests (ministers). There are also messages specifically tailored to men or women. In a number of cases, messages were to specific cities.

1) *Matthew 15:24*: Jesus said: ". . . I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Definite constraints were placed upon the mission and operation of Jesus Christ. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He bore no message or responsibility to the Gentiles.

2) *Matthew 10:5–7*: When training the future apostles, Jesus sent them forth with a message. But the recipients of that message were limited. He said: ". . . Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel . . . saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Nothing could be plainer. They were told to whom they must go. And they were informed what they were to say.

3) *Deuteronomy 18:18*: Here is an obvious indication of God's call—concerning a people who will be given the truth after their spiritual blindness is removed. Compare John 1:12. Jesus Christ was commissioned to speak to the called of God. The message He was to deliver was exactly the same as that which Moses had proclaimed to the House of Israel.

4) *Galatians 2:7–8*: ". . . they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)."

Though the gospel was exactly the same, the object of the individual responsibility was considerably different. Paul was commissioned to speak the same message to the Gentiles which Peter was required to proclaim to the Israelites. See also Ephesians 3:1–9.

5) *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 [Spirit]: 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. . ."

Instructions were given directly to the twelve apostles, just before Jesus Christ was received back into heaven. Yet, in the broad, spiritual sense of this command, it cannot apply to those times only, but must relate also to our times—these last days, just before the return of Jesus Christ. For, Christ said He would be with those involved in this command—that He would be with them to the end of the age, the time made clear as being synonymous with His Second Coming (Matt. 24:1–3).

What is absolutely clear is this: Whoever Jesus Christ implied would be responsible for the fulfillment of that command would be held accountable. There is no indication that the responsibility would be transferred to another party. We must remember that the mere failure of one party to fulfill an office does not automatically leave the door open for another to assume that responsibility. The Bible makes it very clear that God must call and commission every servant who undertakes any work of His.

The limits of this command are the world. The bounds of the message and the area of responsibility are made clear and understandable. Whoever was accountable had been given a very definite command to proclaim an unalterable message, the same as Christ taught, to the entire earth—to all peoples. If the one held accountable failed to consistently fulfill this command, it then became the *responsibility of God* to create a new work or to reassign that initial charge. Any change in the initial truth which was given is evidence that the charge was altered and a manifest proof of failure.

6) *Jonah 1:1–3; 2:1–2*: The message was given. The object of that message was made clear. Jonah was instructed to go to Ninevah and speak the words which God had given to him. This command could not have been fulfilled by Jonah's going to either Jerusalem or Samaria. The charge was fulfilled only by Jonah's going to Nineveh. Further, the responsibility would not have been completed if Jonah had *altered or changed the message*. Before Jonah could fulfill the commission which God had given to him, he had to understand the message and the *object* of that message. These are characteristics of every responsibility which God gives. The servant is called. The message is given. There can be no change of either. The appointed man is the servant. He must fulfill the command of God. If he fails to do so, that failure in no way opens up an avenue of assumption on the part of anyone else. Such an assumption would be as great a sin as the failure to perform on the part of the one chosen by God to do His work.

7) *Ezekiel 2:1–5*: From the internal evidence, this is a command to some servant of God to carry a message to modern-day Israel. The limits of this command are the bounds of the nations of Israel. There is not implied, here, any all-inclusive command to go to the entire world—to all peoples. Further, there is no evidence that this chosen vessel of God is also the one who will be going to all peoples of the earth, carrying the message of Matthew 28:19–20. Any such assumption could lead one into gross error. The internal evidence indicates—strongly—that there are two different works involved in these two commands.

In all cases observed and studied, there are definite limits of specific peoples to whom God gives His message, through individually chosen servants. These limits must be honored. God will not honor any man who assumes that a specific responsibility affords him the right to go beyond the specific command, and begins to perform a more comprehensive work. We all understand this in commercial and industrial activity. The world today understands such limitations. Why is it that we automatically assume that any spiritual charge today entails totality? Why cannot we take God's Word at face value, just as we do instructions of a physical nature? Man's greatest problem has always been assumption—especially as it relates to the spiritual. Men assume they are Christians. They assume they have the right to undertake any type of work *which strikes them*. They assume they can alter or change what God gives. Yes, men are prone to many and varied assumptions. But, such assumption is not honored or accepted of God.

### **The Limitation of Length or Duration**

Events, responsibilities, and time are all limited by predetermined ends. In every case we have seen, the completion occurred just exactly as God foreordained. God has operated

and fulfilled His plan on the basis of schedule and purpose. He is a God of order—not of confusion and happenstance.

A work or mission of God has a definite end. Frequently, the people at large do not comprehend the time factor involved. The conclusion may be taken as a simple, routine event. But the termination occurs precisely as determined by God.

1) *Exodus 12:41* (compare *Gen. 15:13*): Because circumstances were not right in the land of Canaan, God proclaimed a time of turmoil and tragedy over His people Israel before they were mercifully led out of the land of Egypt. This event occurred exactly according to the time indicated by God. The term "selfsame day" is a strong indication of the precision of time involved. The conclusion of the events which adversely affected Israel was determined long before the actual beginning of the time involved.

2) *Isaiah 46:10*: The counsel and purpose of God are immutable. They cannot and will not be changed. God has declared the end from the beginning. The basis of this declaration is obviously the will of God, which is intrinsic to plan and purpose. He has determined an end to all which we know as the present life and circumstances of mankind. On the basis of that plan, God has made known, from time to time, components of that schedule. His will is made known through His chosen servants—human beings chosen for that purpose.

3) *Daniel 8:17, 19; 11:27, 35; 12:4, 9*: The end of all things—including specifics within that plan—will occur only at the appointed time. God has willed it so. Assumption or false conceptions of man will not change that fact. What God has determined will stand.

4) *Luke 22:37*: The mission and purpose for the first appearance of Jesus Christ had a predetermined end. Whatever was contained in that mission had to be fulfilled on time. The work of Christ had a precise beginning—as we saw earlier—and it had an appointed ending. It was not altered or changed because of any internal or external factors. What He was commissioned to fulfill was fulfilled. His mission and purpose was to fulfill the will of His Father.

5) *Acts 3:19–21*: The works of Christ, *subsequent* to the completion of His earthly mission, are equally predetermined. He will reside on God's throne, in heaven, for a specified period of time. Then, at the appointed time, He will be commissioned to rule the earth. This time, He will sit on the throne of His glory. And during the tenure of this regnal responsibility, He will perform the foreordained work given to Him.

6) *1 Corinthians 15:24–28*: At the appointed time, following the millennial reign and the time of the Great White Throne Judgment, Christ will turn the reigns of government back over to the Father, that He (the Father) may be all in all. Again, the mission or work of Christ is specifically limited in time and duration. Is it not logical to think that works which are assigned to men have equal limitations of time and duration? Indeed! But, just as most people did not comprehend the events which surrounded the life of Christ, so all but those who truly understand will not comprehend the times appointed to men.

### **The Limitation of Message**

Perhaps the most definite limitation is that of the message. The servants are chosen by God. They are sent with specific purposes in mind. God delivers the message and requires faithfulness to the responsibility.

1) *Exodus 4:14–16, 22–23*: God chose the man Moses. He gave him the message to deliver. And God told him to whom he must go.

Any messenger chosen of God is called for a specific purpose. Before he can achieve results inherent to that purpose, he must be *given* the message to be delivered. It is inconceivable that God would call a servant and dispatch him upon a required mission *before delivering the necessary message* to him. Men do not fail in such considerations. How much less God?

2) *Jeremiah 1:1–10*: Jeremiah was chosen by God to be a messenger *to the nations*. He was *given* the required words which he was to deliver to them. He said:

. . . Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee . . . I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. . . . I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. . . . Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

How much more plainly can the requirements and the imposed limitations be written? He was called of God. The message was delivered to him. And he was sent to the nations—with specific purposes in mind.

3) *Ezekiel 2:6–8*: God's instructions to Ezekiel, His chosen servant, are equally explicit. Note God's instruction:

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

Instruction given by God was given to the servant Ezekiel—in captivity. But the specifics of the charge apply, in all probability, to a modern-day Ezekiel. For, the message which he was required to carry could not possibly relate directly to the House of Israel in his day. They had gone into captivity some 130 years prior to this time. And, at the same time, Ezekiel himself was a captive in the exile of the House of Judah.

The important point to remember is this: A message is given to an end-time servant, and it cannot change. Any change within the tenure of the charge is ample evidence that someone initially *assumed* office and responsibility, or that one who bore the responsibility departed and was unfaithful to it. The inherent conditions and promises of this responsibility, as illustrated by the above points, make this clear and absolute. The man was called of God. The required words of God were delivered to him. How, then, can they be subject to review or change?

4) *John 12:49–50*: Jesus, the Son of God and appointed Apostle of God, did not speak His own words. He said: ". . . I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

Before Christ was sent to this earth to fulfill the commission which God had given to Him, He was given the message. He assured His hearers that He was faithful to the charge which God had given to Him. Christ said, to those who listened to Him, that if He failed to do the work—inherent in the message—which the Father had given to Him, the people should not believe Him. On the other hand, if He were faithful to the message—the work—the people were going to be held accountable for their actions and be judged by the work which He wrought. The basis of that judgment would not be a changeable conception of what the work was, but it would be the very words which He spoke. The basis of

judgment of all servants, chosen of God, is the message delivered. And it is the responsibility of those enlightened to remain faithful to the Word delivered. The proof of faithfulness is not loyalty to man or organization. Indeed, no! The *only proof* is faithfulness to the message proclaimed. So said Jesus Christ. For, this was the basis of judgment for His work or mission. How much more applicable is this requirement with respect to human beings?

The cardinal question confronting us is this: Does God make known the basic fabric of His message *before* He commissions any chosen servant? Or, does God reveal only part of the essential truth, mixed with some human error which must progressively be rooted out until perfection of message is achieved?

The answer to this is the recorded Word of God—the Bible. In every example known in the pages of the recorded Word of God, God *first made known the message which was to be delivered to specific peoples or nations*. Those messengers were, then, required to be faithful to the mission and message. All history and the instruction of God make it very clear that the delivered message is the means—and the only means—by which all peoples can determine the faithfulness of the servant whom God has chosen and sent. Anything less than those conditions would make it impossible for the servants—those called of God—to fulfill their responsibility of trying and proving the ministers or prophets of God. God is consistent. If He has always worked in that manner in the past, it is a foregone conclusion that He still works in the same manner today.

Please compare the following texts with those things stated above: John 3:32 and 7:15–17. For those who would care to effect a complete review of the Gospel of John, you will be significantly rewarded.

5) *1 John 1:1–5*: As Christ had been sent by the Father, so the apostles were sent to perform the work incumbent upon them. The message had been delivered by Christ while He was with them, here on the earth. At the time of His ascension into heaven, He left specific instructions relevant to their wait—the period of time until they would be endued with power from God, making them capable and strong in the will of God. Then, many years later, the Book of First John was written (probably in the 90s A.D., in which John assured those who were still responsive to the truth (and had understanding) that he was teaching what he had received from the beginning—the same message the other apostles had received and taught until their martyrdom. What he said was: *The message cannot be changed!* Before one can proceed to proclaim that way of life, he must be called, the message must be given to him, and he must be sent to fulfill the purpose of his call. The

message is an absolute limiting factor. Christ could not change it. The apostles, including the Apostle Paul, could not change it. How, then, can we justify any change today?

6) *Matthew 28:19–20*: This prophecy, relevant to mission and responsibility in these last days, makes it clear that the same message is commissioned and that the servant to whom it is given must remain faithful to it. The message to be proclaimed is exactly the same as that taught by Christ and the apostles of the first century. This end-time servant is to be teaching that which Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, commands him. To accept change makes God a liar—or else, it makes the people who advocate the change liars. It is either one or the other. And it is a decision to which we are individually responsible. May God help each one to make the necessary decision.

We have covered the validity of works throughout the ages. We have covered considerable textual material related to imposed limitations. There is much which must yet be covered, concerning the conception of a "work." Next, we will analyze the conditions inherent in any work which God commissions. Also, we will come to understand that people have not always understood or accepted the work of God. From the material which will be presented, it will be simple to see how false conceptions of a "work" have led people into gross error. For these points, we ask you to patiently wait until next month. Hopefully, we will be able to conclude the subject of "the Work" in the next one or two *Monthly Letters*.

With this letter, we convey our deepest love and respect to you all. We do genuinely regard you as God's chosen and faithful. May the rich blessings and love of God be ever with you.

All our love, prayers, and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "All our love, prayers, and respect,".

Raymond C. Cole