

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## What Is "The Work"—Part II

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Greetings Brethren:

Spring is here, and summer rapidly approaches. This is normally the time when spirits begin to soar and confidence emerges from its winter recess. But, for some reason, this year is different. Natural disasters seem to be more frequent and intense; economic crises are a daily threat to the country and to the individual; worldwide, human relationships are deteriorating and openly flaring up in volatile hostilities; the public is literally assaulted daily, via the length and breadth of social responsibility; and the ravages of disease and ill health take a greater toll yearly. Nothing makes the above facts clearer than a mere exercise of collecting clippings from newspapers and periodicals. The problem with the average American is that he is a born optimist—or perhaps it is wiser to say he refuses to face facts for what they are. In this respect, I am reminded of the cartoon which shows the proverbial optimist, shouting out to a companion that all is going well—as he begins his plunge over the precipice, to his own doom 2,000 feet below.

### Acceptable Optimism

Most assuredly, all need to live in confidence and hope. But those factors must be predicated upon something which is real and trustworthy. For the unconverted, there is little upon which to build and manifest hope, except the anticipation of better days in the immediate future. But for the people of God, hope resides not in the assurances of better days in this evil world—rather, their hope lies in the belief of the soon coming of Jesus Christ, who will bring to a conclusion man's vain efforts of the past 6,000 years. Once the bubble of past human efforts has been cleared away, a new foundation will be laid for a better tomorrow. This fabric will never be rent, abused, misused, or tainted by human imperfection.

The major problem of the optimist is that he believes there exists, in today's world, a basic foundation of goodwill, purpose, solidarity, and unity. But, a careful look at the facts of history and current events will tell any thinking man that such a conception is a

colossal daydream. Nowhere in the world does such a foundation exist. And without a foundation, it is impossible to reconstruct this society.

A "new world order" *is* essential. It is the promised order of *God and His Son, Jesus Christ*. It is the time appointed for the construction and establishment of a kingdom which will be controlled only by those who have proven that they have suppressed their own natures and love the way of God. For, the Kingdom of God will be established for all eternity. It will be predicated upon eternal purposes—a foundation of *spiritual* principle.

Though much spiritual progress is noted in the lives of those whom God has kept from falling to the alluring temptations of organization and idolization of man, much work remains to be done. All of us must learn to *fully apply the meaning and purpose* of the spiritual principles which we have learned. We must learn what it is to love comprehensively truth and fellow man—including enemies—as well as to love God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We must all become peacemakers. We must become one in mind and heart. Above all, we must learn to resist the impulse of the flesh to be divisive, at variance, heretical, seditious, hateful, wrathful, sowing discord, and vaunting our own minds. All these are obvious manifestations of the carnal mind—the mind which must be conquered by the power of God's Holy Spirit. With God's Spirit are manifested humility, teachableness, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, tolerance, and affection for one another. Only those who deliberately deceive themselves—by deceitful hearts and minds—will be unable to see the sharp contrast between the two. And, those who deceive themselves ultimately shall pay the piper. It will do little good, in the final day of judgment, to point the finger at someone else.

In the annual rehearsal of the magnificent and beautiful Holy Days of God, we have just kept Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. All of us NOW must daily ask ourselves, Did we take the Passover worthily? For, the Passover is to serve as a mirror—not only of that night, but of the following days, months, and years, as well as all eternity. Examination of our own personal lives is a daily responsibility. We all have the deep, personal responsibility of overcoming. Overcoming has little to do with expectation, desire, or intent. It is the *completed action* of past endeavor. And that endeavor must continue until we inherit the Kingdom of God.

Let us keep the meaning of the Passover in our thoughts daily. We must urgently and intelligently examine ourselves in relationship to that purpose as indicated by our Passover action. Then, just as the Days of Unleavened Bread follow the acceptance of the Passover, so must the effort of overcoming—in relationship to the Law of God—follow the true and genuine revelation of *self* on the night of Passover.

From all the reports which I have received personally since the conclusion of the spring Holy Days, it is obvious God gave us all a magnificent and meaningful occasion. We all owe so much to our merciful, loving, and compassionate Father for His manifold blessings. Our hearts ought frequently to well up in gratitude and appreciation as we think upon those marvelous things which He has done for His dear children. We are not unique or special. We are just blessed, protected, and helped, beyond anything which we could possibly expect.

Now, thanks to God for the faith to continue in the way to which we were called, we can look forward to the Feast of Pentecost. For the true, revealed Pentecost is the day which depicts the receipt of the Holy Spirit—our help and strength. Equally, the false Pentecost—accepted by those who have no love for the Truth of God (2 Thess. 2:10)—depicts the receipt of a different spirit: a spirit of spiritual blindness, defiance, rebellion, chaos, and confusion.

The Pentecost of the Eternal God (not the god of this world) falls on Monday, June 4, this year. All those who love God and His way will fulfill the command to convoke where God sets His name. The place where God sets His name, as all history proves, is the place He inspires His servants—the ministers—to select. In reality, it is no different from any major industrial firm of today, which might send an emissary empowered to make decisions relative to the establishment of a new production facility. He goes in the power and authority of his company. In like manner, true ministers go in the power and authority of Jesus Christ and God the Father. Such ministers do not have the authority to change the instructions and orders given. But they do have the latitude and responsibility to make necessary decisions relevant to required obedience. Just as a minister can determine where the Sabbath services, as commanded convocations of the Lord God, will be held—so he can, with the inspiration and direction of God, select the necessary place for the keeping of the annual feasts. The one is observed on a weekly basis, whereas the other is accomplished on an annual basis. People do not become deeply troubled about the Sabbath. But, amazingly, a few have troubled themselves over the selection of an annual feast site. The principle: If we are not careful, Satan will get an advantage of us and work overtime to destroy stability and direction of mind. We must be on guard constantly (Eph. 6:10–17).

No specific instructions will be given relevant to Pentecost services. These services will be held at all the locations where Passover and Unleavened Bread were observed. For necessary instructions, please contact the lead men in those areas. A list of their names, addresses, and telephone numbers is enclosed. In any areas where changes exist with respect to meetings, locations, or times, details will be announced by those lead men in their respective areas.

## What is the True "Work of God"?

Now, for the continuation of the series on "the Work." Is one's view of "the Work" the true determining factor of one's conversion or Christianity? Does a person's attitude toward a work have *greater spiritual significance* than does his personal overcoming and character growth? In essence, just what is the real intent and purpose of the call and conversion of each servant of God? Or, put in another way: What is the real, true Work of God? Is it possible that "the Work" and personal overcoming dovetail perfectly?

In March, we wrote the first part of the series on "the Work." By now you have had time to thoroughly digest that part. An understanding of that foundational knowledge is absolutely imperative to an adequate comprehension of the points to follow—the basic reasons for the writing of this particular series of letters.

God works. He has always worked diligently, industriously, and intelligently. He created man to work, and allowed him, within the framework of acceptable avocations, to make his own choices. The *performance* of life's required responsibility, however, is another matter. For, whatever we find to do—our own particular work—we must do it with all our might and intelligence. The manner of performance becomes a spiritual principle, even though the choice of work is a physical one. Did not God say, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work" (Ex. 20:9)? Our Maker *commanded* us to work—we were created for that purpose. Employment of slaves and servants, for the purpose of avoiding life's basic requirements, is not approved of God. By both command and example, this prohibition is made strikingly clear.

History and the revealed Word of God make us aware of two fields of endeavor for man. As pointed out, within God's appointed limitations, man may make his own physical choices. God did not foreordain the particular type of gainful, physical employment for each man. But the spiritual field is quite another matter. No one may make the choice, of his own volition, to become a minister of God. A minister, a prophet, or any other servant of God must be called and appointed by God. The work to which he is called must be spelled out, with its requirements and limitations. In accepting such a responsibility, the called minister is in essence agreeing to work in harmony with God. He is not at liberty to fabricate his own conception of what the responsibility is, what the message is, or the scope and extent of his endeavor. He is working *for God*. His Employer will determine the nature, direction, purpose, scope, and extent of the work.

As we have seen from the past history, faithful servants of God accomplished the *will of God*. They became co-laborers with Him in the field of spiritual endeavor. Like any good hired servant, they sought to understand and wholeheartedly fulfill the specific

instructions given. They neither went beyond nor diminished the responsibility. They zealously carried out what they were commissioned to perform.

The concept of a "work" is not new. There have been many works of God, from the beginning of time. Each was ordained of God. But some servants failed—because they attempted to change the office, to change the message, or in some other way to alter the specific instructions which God had given to them. The results were always terrible and tragic.

We have seen that every responsibility carried innate limitations—in respect to message, time, geography, etc. The recorded Word of God is the historical past from which we are to derive the eternal, unalterable, and unchanging principles by which to live, act, and obey today. Will men ever learn from the lessons of the past?

In every subservient responsibility, there are implied conditions. These restrictions, observed from the vantage point of the chosen servant, may be termed "limitations"—that is, obvious bounds of duty and requirement. However, from the vantage point of the One calling and commissioning, the positive aspects may be viewed as "conditions"—conditions to the fulfillment of the intent and purpose for which the servant was chosen. And God is not, indeed has never been, derelict in the discharge of His duties and requirements. What are those conditions—conditions necessary for successful performance on the part of any hired "servant"? It matters little whether the duty is physical or spiritual. The same conditions apply.

### **A Servant Must Be Called and Trained**

In the physical realm, can you imagine a person's simply deciding for whom he is going to work? And further, deciding just what he is going to do—that is, the very nature and extent of the work he will perform? Seems almost ludicrous, does it not? Yet, this is precisely what most presumed servants of God have done. The assumption, by most human beings, is that God has left the field wide open for just anyone who may wish to join the ranks.

But what are the recorded facts, legally and historically? All of us need to understand, for there is a very specific responsibility incumbent upon the laity. They must be able to determine properly the true, genuine, and chosen servants of God. All others are imposters. In the case of the *chosen* servant, the recorded facts found in the Bible form the basis of a significant warning against any presumption.

To understand comprehensively, let us review the operation of God, from era to era. How God has worked in the past is a major assurance of how He works in our day. For God is the same, day after day. He changes not.

## The Examples of Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel were the first two children born naturally, of human parents. They were the sons of Adam and Eve—parents who had a spectacular, miraculous beginning. And these two sons are *types* in Biblical terminology. Cain is a type of humanity—the natural self. Whereas, Abel became the type of the righteous.

In the abbreviated story of the beginning, interesting character traits manifest themselves. Cain was not happy to obey implicitly the instructions of God. He thought it perfectly all right to develop his own way of serving the Lord. But Abel was obediently faithful to the instructions which God had given. Therefore, in process of time, it became obvious that God respected the *obedience of Abel* but not the *presumption of Cain*. This difference led to open hostility—hatred—on the part of Cain, who was not accepted for doing what *he thought* was all right. The result was murder. That hostility has continued, in full bloom, down to our very day.

Since Adam is a type of Christ, and Eve is a type of the true Church, the two sons represent those coming from the same parentage. Abel represents the called, chosen, and spiritually begotten of God. Cain represents those who, though called of God, are unwilling to repress the self and totally subscribe to the will of God. These latter will to obey God by *doing that which seems right to them*.

To this Cain, God said: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 4:7, RSV). Therefore, it is the responsibility of all called and chosen servants of God to mortify—crucify and overcome—the carnal self.

In process of time, Abel was called and trained. He qualified. However, Cain—who indubitably was given an opportunity to qualify (note verse 7 of Gen. 4)—used a great deal of human, carnal rationalization. He reasoned that he could just as well serve God as he willed. But he soon found that this approach was not acceptable to God. To serve Him, the called and chosen must subscribe to His will. They must repress the natural tendencies and wholeheartedly pursue what God requires. Those who are chosen by God today, but who do not will to obey Him with humility and obedience of mind—regardless of belief or conception—will be walking in the way of Cain (Jude 10–12; 1 John 3:10–12; compare 2 Pet. 2:15).

Both Cain and Abel were given opportunity to overcome—to repress the natural tendencies, mortify the works of the flesh, and become implicitly obedient to the will of God. Abel prevailed and thus became a type of the righteous—those who hate the self and love God's Way and Truth, as personified by Christ. But Cain abused his opportunity, finding it more satisfying carnally to subscribe to the dictates of the carnal mind—the mind which, unless replaced with the mind of Christ, vaunts itself against the will of God and leads human beings astray from the priceless revelation which God gave to them (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

Abel, by faith, became an example of continuity, loyalty, and obedience to the truth revealed to him (Heb. 11:4). Although he has been dead for thousands of years, his example still speaks loud and clear to the spiritually alert. He became the example of a faithful, called servant. He did not rationalize and act on his own behalf. He offered the sacrifice of obedience to God because of faith—faith which assured him that God was eternally right, that His ways do not change. And Abel was the type of a more excellent example of continuity and faithfulness—the Son of God, Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:23–29). If *we* turn from faithful continuity—steadfastness in the way of life characterized by the personal receipt of Christ—we cannot possibly escape the consequences of rebellion and defiance against the call and purpose of God. To manifest evidence of solidarity, patience, and conviction, the called of God will be subjected to many "shaking" events. For by this process, God will remove all who do not have the unshakable ingredient of faith. That faith is the manifestation of unalterable belief and trust in the Truth—the revealed Word of God—not in man or organization.

Cain and Abel are types of called and chosen servants of God. Cain is the type of servants who presume, rationalize their own obedience, and act according to their own conceptions of right and wrong (these are the ones who walk in the way of Cain). Cain was a called servant, but one who warped and twisted the Word of God to his own advantage. He manifested little faith in God. On the other hand, Abel is a type of the faithful. He waited patiently for God. He waited for specific instructions. He acted on the basis of those specific instructions which he was given.

The recorded Word of God, the Bible, is a long chronicle of events depicting human beings with little confidence or faith in God and His operation—His work. Many were called and chosen servants of God; but they faithlessly took things into their own hands, doing what seemed right to them.

So, the lessons of history teach us that God's servants must be called and that they must remain faithful to the purpose for which they are chosen. For, faithfulness is indeed a rare commodity.

One must not *presume* to become a servant of God—he must not choose that profession of his own volition. But once he is chosen of God, it is up to the servant to respond to the call. And it is equally important that he remain faithful to that call. He must not become derelict in aggressively carrying out what he was commissioned to perform. On the other hand, he must not add to the charge or presume to undertake other duties to which he is not assigned. Faithfulness involves both these considerations.

### **Noah's Example As a Chosen Servant**

Noah is another example of a called servant of God. He was chosen to perform specific responsibilities. Those duties had little relevance to any other chosen instrument of God. Can you imagine any human being's undertaking the construction of the ark in our day and time? Yet, for Noah to have failed to perform any detail of the instructions given him would have been tantamount to insubordination and rebellion. The principles underlying the necessity of the ark's construction and of Noah's preaching are Biblical record and, as such, form a part of God's revealed Word—by which we must live, even in our twentieth-century day (Matt. 24:36–41).

Noah's assigned work was from God and was for Him. He was chosen specifically because of his love for the Truth (Gen. 6:9) to perform the "work" required in his day. Any assumption by others, no matter how purposeful and right-intentioned, would have met with disfavor from God.

At no previous time had there been a greater need for someone to proclaim the Truth. This proclamation was a warning to the peoples in general—and, at the same time, a means of call and instruction for those through whom God would work. The entire people were bent to do evil. Wickedness reigned in every area of human existence. Integrity, honesty, and right-heartedness had all but vanished from the face of the earth.

Because Noah was a subservient and obedient individual, God called and commissioned him as "a preacher of righteousness"—to warn humanity of impending disaster (2 Pet. 2:5). In proclaiming righteousness (defined as obedience to the commands, laws, statutes, and judgments of God), Noah proclaimed obedience to the comprehensive way of God. He did not argue with God, but was implicitly obedient (Gen. 6:22). And because of that faithful obedience—to an unchanging responsibility which God had given him—God promised him safety and protection from the impending disaster which the world was to receive for its iniquitous ways (Gen. 7:1).

God called Noah to fulfill a very *specific* work. But before sending him forth to do that work, God apprised him of the responsibility. He informed Noah of the message to be delivered and the favorable results for faithfulness to the call (Gen. 6:13, 18).

Noah was born for specific purposes (Gen. 5:29). Those purposes were detailed by God, so he knew exactly what he was to do. His work, as ordained by God, was three-phased. He was to proclaim the Truth—the way of God—and the consequences of violating it (2 Pet. 2:5). He was also called to build an ark—an ark of salvation (Gen. 6:14–22). And, finally, he was commissioned to repopulate the earth, after the abatement of the devastating flood brought on by the wickedness of men (that flood resulted in the total destruction of mankind, with the exception of eight souls—see Genesis 9:1–17).

Noah did not *assume* any positional responsibility—though he lived righteously before God. He was called of God to perform the work which God had in mind for him. No assumption is *ever* acceptable to God. Men need not presume or appropriate any office or responsibility. God is all-powerful. He is perfectly capable of making His will known. Why do so many feel that *they* must review times and conditions, and then assume that God has called them to do His work? Such a practice would not be tolerated in our daily physical relationships. But because God is invisible—and, too frequently, eliminated from our thinking altogether—men are prone to assume and arrogate title, position, responsibility, and every other endeavor which is to their liking or choosing.

As was true in the case of Noah, God *alone* knows what He wants done and when He wants it done. At such times, our all-powerful God will call whom He pleases, train him for the work to be done, and then send him to the task for which he was chosen. It is a very simple and understandable procedure. It cannot be misunderstood by any except those who will to do their own way—those who conceive their own responsibilities and aggressively set about to perform them, while justifying their actions.

God has worked from the beginning. Whatever work He wills to perform, here on the earth, will come by His authority and in His own time. All true, spiritual work is of God, though He has always used human instruments. These human instruments are chosen by Him at the time a specific work is necessitated.

### **Abraham's Example**

Another of the works of God was that performed by Abraham. Abraham was a man of character, purpose, and conviction. He was usable timber in the hands of God. In most cases, the fundamental traits of honesty, integrity, conviction, and purpose are manifested

in the lives of God's chosen instruments before they are chosen. This is especially true of those chosen to bear major responsibility and to carry out some specific work God requires.

Abraham was an individual of accomplishment. He was successful, but at the same time humanitarian. He was not ruthless and self-esteemed.

Genesis, the 12th chapter, begins the history of God's direct dealing with Abraham. Verse 1 indicates that God had spoken to him earlier, requiring that he depart from the land of his nativity. Verse 31 of chapter 11 reveals the obedience of Abraham and his family, regarding the instruction of God. They left with all possessions from the land of Ur of the Chaldees, and began the journey to the land of Canaan, settling in Haran (Gen. 11:31).

At the time God addressed Abraham about the requirement to leave Ur of the Chaldees, He conditionally made a covenant agreement with Abraham. This agreement embodied the length and breadth of the great work which God would fulfill through him.

Up until the time of Abraham, God worked through individuals whom He had called. Then, God expanded His promises to involve a nation—solidification of a specific group of people, all stemming hereditarily from Abraham and Sarah. The assumption, on the part of Abram and Sarai—that a son born to Sarai's handmaid would suffice to fulfill God's promise to them—was not acceptable to God. The seed and the future of that people had already been predetermined by God. Abraham, through the proper wife, was to begin the development of a mighty nation. And that nation was to become a blessing to all other peoples. This assurance from God involved both physical and spiritual promises. For, as the peoples of the world have been greatly benefitted physically by the creation of this particular nation, so also have all the peoples of the earth been blessed spiritually by the presence of those who obey God. Those who obey spiritually have become the children of Abraham, for he is the father of the faithful.

Abraham's work was an awesome one. It was the *very work of God*, wrought through Abraham. No individual could have assumed the responsibility to bring forth the covenant people. Only the one chosen by God could do it. For, in all respects, the blueprint of God's national purpose had been drawn up long before the actual work began. The Bible makes it very plain that God's plan was laid out from the foundation of the world. And there is every reason to believe that some of the servants whom God willed to use in their respective times had already been selected at the time of the creation of this blueprint. Consider the case of Jeremiah. Or, the responsibility of John the Baptist. Understanding the broad implications of Deuteronomy 32:8–9, one is forced to believe that Abraham's work was also foreordained from the foundation of the world.

Because Abraham was not presumptive, God gave him an *unconditional* agreement. He was faithful to the call of God. His work is spelled out in detail in chapters 12, 15, 17, 18, and 21 of Genesis. Without the aid of God, Abraham could not have known the time and message limitations imposed by God. Patience and an implicit trust in God are vital to becoming a successful and faithful servant. God reveals such details only to those whom He calls and sends.

## Moses' Example

Though Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph bore specific responsibilities, the next major, independent work to be performed by God was that accomplished through Moses—a servant who was highly trained for the work which he was destined to perform.

Moses did not assume. He was called of God. God gave him specific instructions, directly relevant to the work he was called to carry out.

As a called and chosen servant of God, Moses became the very type of Jesus Christ (Acts 7:34–36; Deut. 18:15–18; Heb. 3). There was no assumption on Moses' part—God specifically called him. God, the Creator of all things, became the *direct employer* of Moses and bore direct authority over him. Moses was subject to the will of his Employer, not to the dictates of the people.

A true servant of God is not envious of any chosen vessel of God (Num. 11:27–29). Furthermore, it must be understood that there is perfect agreement among all chosen instruments of God. They do not counter, resist, or operate contrary to one another. As we shall see later, there should be no difficulty in making the determination of which ones are truly serving God.

The point here which must be remembered and stressed is that *Moses did not choose to be* the servant of God. Neither did he decide that the children of Israel needed to be delivered from their bondage and servitude. Furthermore, he did not decide how or when this operation should be accomplished. As a chosen vessel, he simply and faithfully carried out the charge given to him. The Apostle Paul made it very clear that Moses was faithful in all his house, in exactly the same manner that Christ was in His.

From the beginning of the creation of man, up to the time of Moses, every servant God used was specifically chosen by Him. Each was chosen in an appointed time—when a work needed to be done. *God chose* the servant destined to carry out that work. Though there was always assumption on the part of people—assumption that anyone who so decided

was a chosen vessel of God—the real instrument of God was known by the works performed, the fruits manifested, and the obvious intervention of God on this servant's behalf. God has never backed up or substantiated the arrogant claims of those who *presume* office and responsibility.

## **The Examples of Prophets and Kings**

Though there were chosen and commissioned servants who followed Moses, the next major responsibility was that borne by the prophets. They were messengers of God. Presumption on the part of anyone who claimed this office was a capital offense, carrying with it the death penalty. However, with any presumption came also a significant responsibility upon each member of the family of Israel. The basis of evaluating any prophet was the truth which God had revealed to the people—not merely the acceptance by a group or by the nation, the physical Church of God of the Old Testament. Every Israelite was required to evaluate a man's work on the basis of the unchanging Law which God had delivered to the nation. Any prophet who by presumption attempted to lead Israel astray was to be stoned. We must remember that false prophets were generally true servants who became lifted up in their own vanity and thereby became false prophets. They were *first* true prophets but *later* became false prophets. In other words, they were originally prophets of God. They could not become *false* prophets unless they were initially *true* prophets. Nowhere, in all the Bible, can any reference be found to Israel's following the Gentile prophets of their respective times. The Bible deals only with those who had a relationship with the Eternal God. The false prophets of the Bible are those who were once called and chosen of God. They were His servants—but servants who were lifted up in pride and arrogancy. They turned to their own ways and made every attempt to justify themselves. So the basis of required judgment was—and is—always the unalterable truth which God revealed to those chosen of Him.

As was the case with all the predecessors of the prophets, so must a prophet today be called. This is not an allowable office of presumption. All prophets, whatever the time of their responsibility, must be called. They are instruments of God—servants hired and sent by Him. No matter how well intentioned, assuming the office of a prophet was not and is not acceptable to God. God retains the right to call whom He chooses to do His will.

Let us note just a few examples of the above principles. Samuel did not choose to be a servant of God. While yet too young to know the difference, he was chosen by God to be a prophet in Israel (1 Sam. 3:1–21). And God, by many ways, made the people aware that he was to be a servant in the nation.

In the days of Moses, God selected servants who were to be His prophets (Num. 11:24–30). Moses knew and understood this charge. However, the people well understood the seriousness of any presumption on the part of the average member of the nation. They were so troubled, they wanted Moses to forbid these prophets from prophesying. But Moses was not jealous for his responsibility. He desired to see *all the people* of Israel become servants of God.

It must be remembered that, in the case mentioned above, the people who were involved were not at cross purposes with one another. There is no variance within the Spirit of God. God's way is singular. The Truth is absolute. It is self-seeking which brings about contention, heresy, variance, wrath, and strife.

Jeremiah was not yet born. How would it have been possible for him to make an individual choice—his own personal selection—to become a prophet of God? The truth is, he did not choose the office of a prophet. God selected him, established him as a prophet, and sent him with power and authority (Jer. 1:1–6). God, by virtue of creation, is owner and possessor of all things. He can call and choose whom He wills. The called one has no right to reject or assume. He must fulfill the will of God, and that will only. Such obedience is termed "faithfulness." And faithfulness is a tremendously high virtue, in the eyes of God.

Yes, men can choose to defy God. Even though chosen to perform a specific work, they can either alter it—by assumption and self-will—or refuse to carry out the charge. However, in either case, the price of rebellion will be paid, in God's appointed time.

Jeremiah had no alternative. He was chosen of God. He was selected to be a prophet to fulfill all the will of God. Any other person who assumed that office, even though the need was most apparent, would have been rebellious and self-seeking. Likewise, Jeremiah would have been rebellious and self-seeking, had he failed to faithfully perform the responsibility. In the final analysis, all people—when called for specific responsibilities or called to become vessels of honor, for the purpose of inheriting life—must patiently wait for instruction and guidance from the One who has power over life and death.

John the Baptist did not assume. He was *foreordained* to be a prophet of God. At the appointed time, God called him and he was sent with the message which he was required to deliver. He remained faithful to his call until the day of his death.

Once again, the time had come—the time appointed by God at the foundation of the world. Do we suppose that any other person, assuming the office of John the Baptist, would have met with favor from God? The time was right. There was a basic need: Nothing was more apparent than the fact there was a significant need to warn the people of the

corruption, perversion, and self-will of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But with any call from God, it is a matter of the office. Any person, other than John the Baptist, would have been guilty of assumption and perversion of responsibility—for, it was John who was chosen to that specific office.

Moses prophesied of a day when a certain Prophet would appear on the earth. That prophet would bear very special responsibility. Is it safe to assume that when the appointed time came, anyone who chose to do so could properly fulfill that office—an office determined by God from the foundation of the world? Both time and need were correct. Yet, it is utterly impossible for any human being to carry out an office of responsibility until he is called of God, trained, and given the required message. *Afterwards* he is sent to do the will of God, bearing all the necessary authority and power. With these factors in mind, it is plainly obvious that the only person capable of fulfilling the office prophetically indicated by Moses was Jesus Christ. Any other person assuming that office would have been an imposter, worthy of death.

Prophets were specifically chosen servants of God—chosen to carry out specific messages, at very specific times, and for specific peoples. Regardless of the *severe warnings* against presumption, many self-willed prophets became what the Bible refers to as "false prophets." Once again, a significant point becomes abundantly clear. Unfaithfulness to a call becomes apparent by either presumption of office or presumption within office—that is, change or perversion of the message.

A *regnal office* came into being, by unusual circumstances, following the establishment of the office of prophet. All regnal servants, too, had to be chosen of God. Though the people had some say in certain selections, the fact remains that God made the ultimate determination. A case in point is the choosing of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1).

Though selected by God, Saul failed to remain faithful to the charge God had given to him. And when he presumed to usurp office and responsibility not inherent in his initial responsibility, God rejected him from continuing in the office. These same circumstances were experienced by several other kings, both in the united kingdom and in the divided kingdom (Israel and Judah). Consider the examples of Solomon, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Baasha (1 Kings 16:20), Jehu (2 Kings 10:29–31), and others.

As Creator, Lifegiver, and Employer, God is not without recourse against the unfaithful servant. Continuity of responsibility is dependent not only upon the will of God—including time and purpose—but also upon the faithfulness of the servant called. Respect is owed any chosen servant of God, until God elects to remove that servant from assigned office or responsibility. Satan is a prime example (see Jude). But all men are accountable for remaining faithful to God, despite what any other servant may do.

## Christ's Example

Let us now notice the example of Jesus Christ. Though He was a Son, He was God's Messenger and Servant. From the foundation of the world, He was chosen to perform a major work here on this earth (Rev. 13:8). Further, Christ was *that Prophet* to whom Moses made reference in Deuteronomy 18:15–18. His appointment to that responsibility existed from the beginning. No other being could have assumed that office. We must remember that God the Father works all things according to the counsel of His own will. He does not ask for our opinions. He determines what is to be done and then expects us to obey implicitly. No *assumption* of any call—whether a call to become a Christian, a call to perform a specific work, or a call to become a minister of Jesus Christ—is acceptable with God. What is transpiring in the *spiritual world is the work of God*. God is the author and finisher of it. Men are the objects of His interest and purpose. Until God expresses His will and purpose, men exist in darkness. They normally cannot know the will of God. To act without the *direct intervention of God* is to act in complete ignorance of His majestic will. Common sense tells the spiritually alert that presumption in any area of Godly responsibility is the manifestation of ignorance and assumption. We all understand the physical corollaries. But few, indeed, will to comprehend the spiritual. Because human beings do not see God or spiritual things, the avenues of perversion, corruption, and interpretation are wide open.

Christ is a living example for all who spiritually comprehend. He did not assume any office or charge. He was called (selected) by God for the work which He was destined to fulfill. Though much of the work was completed during the time of His first appearance, several very specific and significant responsibilities remain to be accomplished (Acts 3:19–21). He has proved His faithfulness. Therefore, God the Father has entrusted to Him a most awesome part of the overall work transpiring here on this earth (1 Cor. 15:24–28). It would be ludicrous to assume that any other being could assume the office and responsibility which has been reserved for Christ—a responsibility to be fulfilled at the time of His Second Coming. However, the interesting—albeit tragic—fact is this: Those who understand how ridiculous that would be (to arrogate to themselves Christ's second-coming responsibilities) unabashedly assume lesser duties and charges for which they have not been called or appointed by God. The blindness and arrogance involved are great, as is the sin. The only difference is a matter of magnitude.

Christ had come. His first appearance was a reality. The necessity of establishing the New Testament church was manifest. Would it have been acceptable to God for *any human being* to recognize the time and the need and then make a *personal choice* to become one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ? Sounds absurd, does it not? Yet, in many ways, people today are doing the same things almost daily.

Christ told the chosen twelve: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you. . ." They had been fulfilling their routine, physical responsibilities in life. Without any aggressiveness on their part, Christ called them out from those physical responsibilities and ordained them to fulfill spiritual obligations. They could not have been acceptable to God unless they were chosen by Christ, the one God sent to do His work here on the earth. The disciples' choice was one of required response. They could have rejected the call and elected to continue in their own ways. But one thing is certain: They could *not* have been the true apostles of God had they willed, independent of the purpose of God, to become those servants.

Before one can fulfill any purpose of God, a first condition must be met. The individual must be called or chosen of God. God does not rely on volunteers—particularly in carrying out any one of the functional responsibilities involved in the great work which He is working out here below. Of course, there are many ways in which we all can become involved. But, why is it that the acceptable areas of volunteer activity are never the areas in which men want to serve? Could it be that another power or force is behind this desire in men?

All Biblical history reveals that *God first chooses His servants*. The men used in every era of time were specifically called—called for the purpose and work which God had in mind. Is it logical to assume that He would work any differently today? If the Bible is the historical record of God's dealing with man, and the premise upon which all future conclusions must be based—for man shall not live by bread alone, but he must live by every word of God—then the examples recorded therein are for *our* admonition and learning. Since there is not one single example of a volunteer's being selected to perform a spiritual responsibility, whatever the time or need, it naturally follows that only the called of God are approved of Him for any activity today.

Ancient Israel was called to be a model nation for the rest of the world. They could have been a true light and example for all Gentiles (Deut. 4:1–8). But they failed to fulfill the will of God. They wanted to be *like the Gentiles* who were all about them. The lesson is obvious: Even when one is called of God, there is the lustful temptation to want to be like the world, to join the surroundings, and to avoid being different. Oh, the perversity of human nature! Those called of God want, too often, to be like the world. Those *in the world* want to assume prerogatives never given to them—they want to be called the servants of God. Does this not say, in a word, that almost everyone is willing to serve God *if he can do it his own way* without any regard for the will of God?

In concluding this point, let it be made very clear: there are two things required. First, all servants of God—those chosen to do His will—must be *called of Him*. Second, once

called, those servants must remain faithful to that call—both in the continuation of the responsibility and in the maintenance of the truth which was delivered to them before they could begin their work.

### **The Message Is Always Given by God**

Of those conditions inherent in responsibility, we have covered the first—which deals with the absolute necessity of being *called of God*. The second is equally imperative and significant. Though called, a servant cannot be effective unless *the purpose of that call* is made clear to him. The message must be given by God. The servant is not called to do his own will. He is called by God to carry out a very specific purpose. And God always spells out the length and breadth of that purpose—He is never derelict in His responsibility. Neither does He use subterfuge and trickery. The purpose (message) is always clear and to the point. For that reason, no change is ever acceptable to God.

Is it conceivable that God would call and send a messenger without giving him the inherent knowledge of that commission? Does it make sense to believe that God would change the message—especially after the basic work of establishing a foundation had already transpired?

To believe either of the above would render God ineffective, fallible, and incapable of fulfilling spiritual purposes.

What do the historical examples teach? Was God fallible? Or, was the problem always with men? It is time we take a very careful look at the facts of history. Will we believe what is Biblically recorded? What is recorded is applicable today—for it is the record of Truth, the principle and way by which all men shall live.

Adam (the first man) and Eve (the mother of all living) were the first married couple portraying the Church-Christ relationship. They began the physical family relationship, a type of the spiritual family relationship.

Having created Adam, God inherently bore rule and responsibility over him. Adam was devoid of all learning until God instructed him in the way of life (Gen. 2:15–17). God expected Adam, as the head of the family, to properly instruct his own wife and control the orientation and direction of the family.

However, in the process of time, Satan made his overt advances of deception. He went to the woman, with his lies and deception, and obviously encouraged her to use her

charms and feminine influence on her husband. Thus, it was through Adam's own new wife, whom God had given to him, that he fell for the subtlety perpetrated by Satan.

The very Truth of God—which would have made them happy, successful, and contented—had been given to Adam and Eve. But they did not manifest any love for it. They became enraptured with the prowess and potential of their own minds—their own human potential. They literally bowed before the capability of their own mental reason—a reason which, without the guidance and inspiration of God's Spirit, was defective.

The results were tragic. The beatific circumstances which God had promised them for obedience were now lost. They were forced to repair to the turbulence, distrust, anxiety, frustration, sorrow, and labor of the mundane existence which *they had chosen*. Yet, despite the proliferation of sorrow, wretchedness, and misery, mankind today still fights for and defends his physical right. To this very day, most of mankind do not—indeed, will not—recognize the reasons for their difficulties. It is a rare person who will look at his own sorrows, experiences, and adversities and then make an attempt to discover the causes. On the contrary, most look for answers outside of themselves. Human beings of today are no different than were their forebears, Adam and Eve. For, while Satan influenced them in the way of sorrow and grief, the real problem was the weakness of their own natures and flesh. They did not have the character to say a simple "NO" to Satan. They did not have the faith to implicitly believe God for what He said to them.

God had delivered the *absolute, unalterable, and unchanging truth* to Adam and Eve. But, because they listened to Satan's subtle voice (tantalizing to the carnal mind), they lost faith in God and the way of life He had delivered to them. They began to question God's integrity. They began to doubt, to have second thoughts. Because of doubt, genuine love of the Truth became lost. The result was the inevitable trust in their own carnal, fleshly minds—the last thing they should have trusted.

What a contrast to Christ, the antitype of Adam! Christ placed implicit trust in the Father. He carried out to perfection the will of God. More will be said, at a later time, concerning this contrast.

As indicated earlier, the two sons who proceeded from common parentage represent the two types of servants called of God. Cain is a type of those servants who were called but who turned back to their own ways and exercised confidence in *their way of doing things*. Abel is in notable contrast, because he did not reinterpret the instructions of God in the light of what *he* felt acceptable to God. He did exactly what God required of him. For that reason, he became the type of all righteous.

In the light of this significant historical example, the subject material under consideration becomes very clear. God must choose and call. He must give the necessary instructions—the message. Then, once the message has been delivered, the specifics must be carried out to the letter and to spiritual perfection. Please read chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Genesis.

God, alone, knew the time determined for the global destruction of the earth by the Flood. He alone knew who should be appointed to render the warning necessary before this supernatural intervention. And, only God—whose work this was—knew what message He wanted delivered. In any of these areas of responsibility, presumption would have been ridiculous. Can you imagine anyone's assuming the responsibility of Noah and beginning the work 250 years before the Flood, but thundering to the people that within 120 years a universal deluge would come upon the earth? A mere miscalculation of 130 years. The results? The truth and purpose of God would have become contemptible in the eyes of the people who heard the warning.

While it is easy to see, in retrospect, the specific details of past Biblical circumstances and events, those situations would appear laughable if the prophets then had applied the same logic, belief, or practice which so many attempt to use now. Yet, most human beings continue with religious ardor to uphold *their own concepts*—illogical and unreasonable, in relationship to the past—concerning the present and the prophetic future. Is it any wonder that men have failed to learn from past experiences?

No one can doubt the specific call of Noah. No one can contend with Abraham's unusual call and his relationship with God. The disciples were specifically called, taught, and commissioned by Jesus Christ. The absolute, unalterable words of life had been given to them. They were not authorized to make any changes in the message which had been delivered to them. Yet, none of these facts seem to make a dent in the mind of the person who presumes to be a chosen servant of God. What a paradox!

Noah was minding his own business. He sought to live a righteous and acceptable life before God. The result: God, when looking for a servant to fulfill His will at the appointed time, called this righteous man and commissioned him to warn the people of the impending disaster (Gen. 6:12–22). For faithful obedience to the work which he had been given, Noah was spared from the disastrous flood he had prophesied would befall humankind (Gen. 7:1). Then, as a result of being allowed the privilege of escaping the Flood, Noah and his three sons were commissioned to go forth from the ark and repopulate the earth (Gen. 8:15–17 and 9:1). God gave them a sign that the earth would never again be destroyed by water (Gen. 9:8–17).

The Truth was given to Noah. He was *told* what he was to speak to the people. He was instructed thoroughly in the nature of his work. Noah performed that work perfectly. He did not change or alter it. He went because he was commissioned. He was commissioned by God to give the necessary message. As a faithful servant, he did what his Master wanted done. He spoke the words of God.

Abraham walked and communed with God. He set an outstanding example of a faithful servant, by waiting on God and doing only that which God commissioned him to do. God called him out of his own country and from the presence of his kinsfolk. He implicitly obeyed (Gen. 12:1, 4). And for faithful obedience, he was promised the privilege of becoming the founder of a great nation—a nation whom all the rest of the world would respect. The nature of his work was made plain. Instructions related to the carrying-out of that responsibility had been delivered to him. His spiritual obligation was to carry out that work *exactly* as God had delivered it to him.

The rewards of obedience were clearly indicated. But the time of their fulfillment was not given until later. Abraham had to wait in faith and patience, for the actual inheritance was not to be accomplished until long after his death (Gen. 15:1–18). God required Abraham to manifest *maximum* faith—He did not make the fulfillment of that promise an easy event. Both Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were long past child-bearing age when God gave them a son in whom they could begin to realize the ultimate fulfillment of those promises. But the faith of Abraham did not waver. He believed and trusted God, waiting patiently for Him. What an example of patience and faith! It is no wonder Abraham is called the father of the faithful.

The second operation of God, in fulfilling any work or responsibility which He may deem necessary, is to give the required message and/or the details of the work to be done. Abraham did not assume. He did not take things into his own hands. He did not contrive a message or outline his own glorious responsibility. From all indications, he lived a normal life and performed all the responsibilities necessary to his livelihood. Obviously, he was a principled man and had appreciable character.

Without any form of assumption or contriving, Abraham was called by God at the appointed time and instructed relevant to his future responsibilities—the work which he was to perform. Abraham implicitly obeyed—neither adding to the responsibility nor detracting therefrom. The purpose for his call was made clear by the One who called him. There was no need for any change, alteration, or second-guessing. To have conceived of such a necessity would have been tantamount to accusing God of dereliction of responsibility.

For the Biblical record of Abraham's responsibility—his work please refer to Genesis 17:1–22, 18:1–22, 21:12, and 22:1–19. What a clear, explicit example of God's call and the work which He gave to be performed! There was no room for doubt or second-guessing. Why is it that some, today, feel they must assume responsibilities God has not specifically given?

Next, God called and commissioned Moses—telling him *exactly* what he should say and do. Moses was not permitted to determine the message, time, or circumstances for himself. He was called to do the *work of God*—which meant, inherently, that *God determined* what Moses was to speak and do. Otherwise, even with God's help, Moses would have been doing his own work. But Moses was not called to do the work of Moses. He was called to the work of God.

The above facts are made abundantly clear in the following texts: Exodus 4:12–17, 30; 6:1–8; 12:3–20; 20:1; 21:1 through 24:6; 25:22; and Deut. 18:15–18. God spoke directly to Moses. Moses did not assume or arrogate any responsibility or direction to himself. As a part of the Bible, does not Moses' example serve to illustrate how God works with His own chosen servants? If not, how then do the instructions, commands, and examples of the Bible apply to you and me in this twentieth century? No message was directly delivered to any of us! But on the other hand, the ways and laws of God are spiritual and eternal. They do not change. Therefore, we can apply all Biblical examples to our time, as is the case of every era of time during the entire history of mankind. The Bible is written for man. It applies to all men, regardless of the time period during which they live.

Based upon the facts surrounding Moses' call and commission—as with all the preceding servants of God—we must conclude that God speaks, either directly or by circumstance, to every servant whom He calls and sends for any major work. Further, when He calls a servant to do His work, He tells that servant *specifically* what work He wants done and what the message is. God does not leave His servant in doubt. For a true servant to question or doubt the integrity of God and the message given is for him to accuse God of total incompetence. When such a doubt exists, only one of two things could have happened. Either the servant lost faith and made unauthorized changes, or the servant was false and only *assumed* that he was chosen of God.

Moses, as a faithful servant of God (Heb. 3), typified Christ's first appearance. Both he and Christ were specifically chosen by God. There was no doubt manifested by either of them.

Men, by nature, are rebellious and disobedient. They often fail to be faithful to a call or commission. Israel was a notable example. She had been called—as a nation and as a church—to set an example of courage, obedience, and humanitarianism for the rest of the world (Deut. 4:1–13). As obedient people, Israel would have been a peculiar and different nation. But Israel did not want to be different. She desired to be like the peoples who surrounded her. In fact, she borrowed nearly all the customs and religious practices of the Gentiles with whom she had physical contact.

Because of the idolatrous practices of Israel, God deemed it necessary to send chosen prophets. These selected prophets did not fabricate the message which they delivered to the people. On the contrary, God gave them the message which *He willed* for them to deliver to His people. They were doing *the work of God*. They were not doing their own work. For, the prophets did not own the people—the people belonged to God. Therefore, it was God's responsibility to perform the work which would warn His people of impending difficulties due to their unfaithfulness. However, even though the work was that which belonged to God, He has always—with but one exception, the delivering of the Ten Commandments—used human beings to perform those responsibilities. And God requires faithfulness on the part of all called, commissioned, and chosen servants—regardless of the time and circumstances.

### **Prophetic Responsibility and Presumption**

Let us note a number of examples of God's chosen servants—in this case, those with prophetic responsibility. As a part of the Biblical record, these examples serve to illustrate *how* God deals with His chosen—and, at the same time, to warn of the consequences of presumption.

Samuel did not arrogate or assume. God chose him and revealed His Word to him (1 Sam. 1, 7, 19–21). Initially, the people rallied behind Samuel because they knew that he was called to be a servant of God. Yet, in the years that followed, some who ought to have known better turned bitter and sour because they did not get their way. Universal acceptance of an individual does not, in itself, prove him to be a called and commissioned servant. For the most part, genuine servants of God were verbally and physically maligned, tortured, abused, and persecuted. It is faithfulness to a call and commission that has always been proof. And faithfulness is not manifested in perpetuity of the office, but in continuity of the message. Why? Because, unless a servant receives from God a direct message (which is absolutely unalterable), any other activity on his part is arrogance and assumption. Compare, also, 1 Samuel 9:9–10 and verse 27.

Jeremiah, also, was a chosen servant (prophet) of God. As such, he was told directly that he should not speak the words which occurred to him, but the words which God would give (Jer. 1:7–9). His work was prearranged for him. He was called of God to do the work which God had in mind. To have changed or altered it would have been rebellion and disobedience.

As specific responsibilities emerged, God gave the pertinent messages to Jeremiah (Jer. 19:1–2, 15). Can we grasp the seriousness of failure on his part? Even though the people—including other servants who had departed from the Truth—threatened and challenged Jeremiah, he was obligated to faithfully perform the work for which he was called (Jer. 26:1–9).

The commission of Ezekiel was no less significant. He was a powerful prophet of God. Yet, he dared not assume. He was called to receive the Word of God and carry out the work which God delivered to him. By *various means* the Word of God came to him (Ezek. 1:1–3). He was required to carry out the work of God, even if the people refused to listen or to act upon the message delivered (Ezek. 2:1–9 and 3:1–27). Note, specifically, Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel is pictured as receiving a message from God and personally carrying it out—in this case, the setting is the time of the resurrection (Ezek. 37:1–14).

Before electing to intervene in the affairs of mankind, God has always delivered a warning message of His intent and purpose (Amos 3:7). Since only God knows the time and circumstances with respect to any people, He alone can call, instruct, and send a servant to give that warning. Certainly, any assumption regarding the above would instantly appear to be ridiculous and arrogant.

When and if God wills to warn specific peoples, He delivers the necessary messages. No one besides God could possibly comprehend His will in this. Do not these facts, alone, make any kind of assumption appear contemptible? Why, then, do so many today assume in the area of prophecy? Is it not because men do not really believe, know, or fear God?

It can all be summed up in a simple statement of the Apostle Paul. He was inspired to write: "*God*, who at sundry times and in divers manners *spoke* in time past unto the fathers by the prophets . . ." (Heb. 1:1). Who did the speaking? Not man, but God. How? As has always been His practice, He spoke through His human servants—who, in the case Paul relates, were prophets.

The words were *of* God. He delivered the messages to His called servants. The transition from the commonly termed "Old Testament" to the New did not change that procedure. For Paul wrote: "God . . . Hath in these last days *spoken* unto us by his Son,

whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds . . ." (Heb. 1:1–2). The Spokesman continued to be God. But this time the Messenger was His own Son.

As the Son of God, did Jesus Christ have the right to fabricate the message God delivered to Him? Or, as a servant of God, did He *already* have delivered to Him the words which He was sent to preach? How did Jesus view His own responsibility? 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. . . . whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49–50) [Compare the following: John 3:34; 8:26–29, 40–42; 14:24].

Up to the time of Christ, every servant whom God called was delivered an unchangeable message *before* he was commissioned. Once called and sent, he was required to be implicitly faithful. Did Christ's own servants, the apostles, have the right of assumption? Or, was the *precise message* which God required they deliver first *given* to them?

Luke wrote: ". . . Unto you [twelve disciples] it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (Luke 8:10). He further stated:

. . . I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see (Luke 10:21–23).

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. They must be revealed by that One who sees all things spiritually. And only those whom God *calls* will have the spiritual truth revealed to them. Jesus made that point very clear—clear for those who can read and comprehend plain Scripture.

Even though the Bible is the physically written, verbal form of the Word of God, it is impossible for any but the called of God to comprehend it spiritually. Argumentation, textual selectivity, partiality, and disinterest are evidences of the confusion and physical orientation which reign in the minds of the carnal. When spiritual comprehension—the

revelation of truth—is granted by God, the understanding of God's Word is magnified, expanded, enlarged, and made more comprehensive. But in no way does spiritual orientation alter or do away with the physical aspect. They corroborate each other. The real intent and purpose of the words of God cannot be understood until God calls, gives us a change of mind, and allows us to perceive their real meaning. Then we must stand in awe of that Word and remain faithful to it.

For one to be a called servant of God, he must first be the possessor of that revealed knowledge which others do not possess. It then becomes the duty of that servant or minister to teach unalterably that knowledge which is revealed to him.

## The Apostles

As we review the ministry of the twelve apostles, we shall see the total substantiation of the above concept. And, in no way does that concept preclude necessary spiritual growth. For, growth is the addition of newly revealed information which does not counter, alter, or change that which God previously revealed.

The twelve apostles, while yet disciples, had the Truth *revealed* to them—the message which they would later be commissioned to proclaim. In this, they were blessed above all others with whom they came in contact. They saw. They understood. They knew the eternal, unalterable Truth. But what Christ had given to them, they could not review, subject to the then-current scholarship, or confer to determine the validity of.

What God requires of His servants is faithfulness. Were the apostles faithful to their call and commission?

The Apostle John wrote, around A.D. 90:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard [words uttered by Christ], which we have seen with our eyes [Christ was the Word made flesh], which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled [the very Word of God made into an animate physical body], of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested [revealed] unto us;) *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. . . .* This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:1–3, 5).

The apostles were the recipients of divinely revealed knowledge. John said, in his twilight years, that they had been faithful to the message which Christ had delivered to them.

What about the Apostle Paul? Though called a little later than the other apostles, did he also receive the message by revelation? And did he remain faithful to the message and commission given?

When writing to the Corinthian church, Paul said:

. . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But *God hath revealed* them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Now we have received . . . the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God (1 Cor. 2:9–10, 12).

As one called of God to take his place in the New Testament ministry, Paul was faithful to the message which Christ had given to him. He said: ". . . I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you . . ." (1 Cor. 11:23). Again he said: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received. . ." (1 Cor. 15:3). To the Ephesians he wrote:

. . . by revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . (Whereby [his writing] . . . ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the Sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3–5).

Paul *knew* that God had revealed the Truth to him. When questioned by doubters, he made it clear that he had delivered the message to the people just as he had *received* it. Paul knew that faithfulness is required of a steward, for he wrote of it.

One cannot proclaim the Truth until one *receives* it. Then, once called and commissioned, a minister is required by his Employer—God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ—to be implicitly faithful. Arrogance, change, and perversion or corruption of the Word delivered will not be tolerated by God. The day of reckoning is inevitable.

The apostles of Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Paul, *received* the Truth. They were *faithful* to their call. But what message did they receive?

Just before Christ ascended into heaven, to be with the Father, He commissioned the apostles. In Matthew 28:19–20 we read:

Go ye [specifically, the twelve apostles, but the context indicates it applies to all called and sent servants of Christ] 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 alway, even unto the end of the world [the age]. . .

The very same things Christ taught, the apostles were to teach. The called and commissioned servants are under the same command until the Second Coming of Christ.

Just what did Christ teach? From His own lips, He said that *the Father gave Him a commandment as to what He should say and speak*. He did not speak one word that was His own.

The Truth has never changed! What was given to Israel of old is precisely what was given to Christ. And what Christ taught is exactly what the apostles—including the Apostle Paul—taught.

What is recorded Biblically is for our admonition and learning. It is the eternal Word of God, codified. It is the *very Word of God* by which we are to live. In the totality of that Word, there is not one indication of a messenger's *being sent* and later having to recant, admit doctrinal error, and change his essential message. But there is ample evidence of servants' turning from the truth which God had given, reverting to human arrogance. Will we believe the Bible? Or, will we continue to presume—as so many previously called sons and daughters are doing in rationalizing their acceptance of a different concept or standard? Remember, the called will live by the Word of God. Will we continue to be a part of the called and faithful servants of God?

Israel of old—the physical nation—failed to fulfill the will of God, because the people did not have faith. What is written of them is recorded for *our* benefit. As the called and chosen of God today, we have been empowered by the Spirit of God. We have been called to set a vastly superior example of faith and consistency. Will we continue in the words which have been delivered to us? We were *taught*. The rest is up to us! The wise will not fall into the unbelief characterized by the Biblical example of Israel.

## Servants Must Be Sent

A servant, though called of God, has no rights of presumption. As we have seen, he cannot create his own message or alter the one which has been delivered to him. When any time factor is involved, the true and honest servant will wait patiently until he is sent by God. He will not presume or arrogate responsibility to himself.

In those cases where there is no specific message, the called servants are held responsible for performing specific *nonverbal* works. This is shown by the following examples: 1) The responsibility of *Adam* was not necessarily verbal. He was commissioned to take care of the physical earth which God had placed under his charge—a charge that carried down to all humankind, even to our own day. 2) Though *Noah* was a preacher of righteousness, his specific work was to construct the ark and save specimens of all that God had created. 3) Most of the work for which *Abraham* was called, though involving much instruction and teaching, was of a family nature—bringing forth the promised son, properly teaching his children, and generally living the principles of truth as an example of faith and obedience. 4) *Moses'* work was both verbal and physical. He had to do much teaching. At the same time, he was required to confront the leaders of Egypt and convey the messages which God had delivered to him. The responsibility of teaching and instructing was augmented after Israel's departure from Egypt. An example of God's direct dealing with Moses can be read in Exodus 3:10–15. He did not, of himself, will to be the chosen servant of God. In fact, he very reluctantly accepted the initial responsibility, feeling that he was wholly unqualified in every respect. After Moses agreed to do the will of God, he did not assume. He waited patiently for the word of God and went to carry out specific responsibilities only when God sent him.

The prophets were never allowed to assume. If one did assume any direction or message, he was termed a "false prophet." A prophet, if called for that responsibility, was permitted to carry a message of instruction or a warning only when God gave the message—and only to whom He sent them, and for the period of time dictated.

For an example, note Jeremiah. In chapter 19, verses 14–15, we read: "Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the Lord had sent him to prophesy . . ." He did not presume to go to Tophet. God had sent him to carry a specific message, as indicated in verse 15. Jeremiah said: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel . . ."

God had instructed Jeremiah, in general, what his work was to be: The prophet must go to whomsoever he was sent, delivering whatever words were given him (Jer. 1:7).

On one occasion he was sent to warn the people of Judah, including the leaders. Judah did not react favorably. The people did not receive the words which God had sent, and Jeremiah was threatened. His life was at stake (Jer. 26:12–15).

At the same time Jeremiah was carrying *the words of the Eternal* to the House of Judah, false prophets (one-time servants of God) were singing a different tune within the nation of Judah. They were telling the people that all would be well with them—that they did not need to change their ways, or repent and return to the ways which God had delivered to them through His servant Moses. Now a serious responsibility fell squarely upon the shoulders of the people. Whom should they believe? And how were they to determine the true versus the false? Certainly not on the basis of the prophet's national identity, or his organizational membership. Further, appealing to a name or to other physical features would have been fruitless. How, then? The means of determining this had been given by God from the beginning of the people (as a nation) whom He called. It is found in Deuteronomy 13:1–5. The truth which God had given was the only permanent guide. His ways were perfect, and thus became an absolute standard by which the total conduct of the people and the nation could be judged. And the responsibility of determination fell squarely upon the shoulders of all who existed in the confines of the nation which God had established. Prophet, priest, member—or whoever—was required to use the way of God, revealed through the hand of Moses, as an absolute guide to faithfulness and integrity.

The people of Judah, in Jeremiah's day, had forgotten—or did not care—that such a responsibility was borne by them. Regardless of the dangers involved, and regardless of whether or not they would hear, God sent Jeremiah to speak *His* words to Judah. Jeremiah told them that others were falsely prophesying to them (Jer. 27:1–18).

Problems and difficulties arise *for all* when presumption exists. False prophets and false ministers create problems for both themselves and the people. And when the people refuse to assume their God-given responsibility—that of remaining faithful to the truth revealed by God—they generate many difficulties for themselves. But as has always been the case, the reality of these difficulties may not be realized until it is too late. *Now* is the time to think soberly, to properly evaluate and examine the trials and problems of the day.

As the prophet Jeremiah was an example of prophetic obedience, so also is Christ a *perfect* example of a New Testament minister—for He is the beginning of the New Testament ministry. As we have seen, Christ spoke only those words which the Father had given to Him. He was totally faithful to the Father.

Having received the words of life from God, Christ was *sent to do the work* for which He was chosen. He did not assume or take anything for granted. He did exactly what He

was instructed to do. Having been instructed by the Father while still in heaven, He was sent to carry out a commission (John 3:34; 4:34; 8:26, 42; 14:24; 17:18). Is not Christ, as the True Shepherd, the perfect example for any New Testament minister—even today? If so, every true minister must be commissioned (sent) to do the work for which he was initially taught by the receipt of the unalterable Truth—the very words of life. Imagine someone's being sent without having received the instruction and guidance essential for the fulfillment of the assigned responsibility! It is completely ridiculous, is it not?

Jesus Christ only *commenced* the New Testament ministry. Subsequent to His day, others were assigned to continue that work. Those subsequently chosen servants were the direct representatives of Jesus Christ. They were responsible for carrying out the same work for which He was sent to this earth.

When commissioning the apostles to carry out the work for which they had been chosen, what did Jesus say? "As thou [the Father] hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). The commission was the same. Their assigned responsibility was the exact duplicate of what Christ had received from the Father. What were they to teach, and for how long?

Go ye [the twelve apostles] therefore, and teach all nations [the limits of their responsibility], 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 what did He command? The very words of the Father—and no other]: and, lo, I [Christ] am with you alway [not only the twelve apostles, but also those who would follow them in carrying out that responsibility. And for how long?], even unto the end of the world [the time synonymous with the Second Coming of Christ—Matt. 24:1–3] . . . (Matt. 28:19–20).

As the words were given to the twelve apostles, so they had to be given to all subsequent servants whom God called and commissioned. That condition prevails until the Second Coming of Christ. Certainly, that fact alone nullifies the presumption that change (perversion) and review (vanity of the carnal mind) is acceptable to God. The example is that the faithful of today will be just as faithful to the revealed words as Christ was to the words which the Father had given to Him. And, further, the chosen of God will not assume. They will faithfully abide within the will of God. They will go when God commissions them—and then only.

The true, faithful servants of Jesus Christ will retain and practice the revealed words today just as they did in the days of the apostles. And, as in apostolic times, some will

depart, turning to their own ways, while appealing to their call and the work which they have performed. But what will the answer of the faithful Christ be? See Matthew 7:21–23.

### **Servants Must Abide within Limits**

We have already seen some detail. But let us quickly review the fabric of this concept. It is important to get it in perspective.

Can you imagine Abel's building the ark? Can you conceive of Noah's deciding to become "the father of the faithful"—the beginning of the nation of Israel? What if Abraham had decided to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt? Sounds incredible, doesn't it? But once again, let me stress, this is exactly what many men have done and are doing today in the name of religion—in their attempts to fulfill the New Testament responsibility of the ministry. Seen in historical perspective, such concepts practiced today are totally ludicrous. But human beings have never been able to learn from history or apply the principles therefrom. Somehow, the conditions and circumstances seem to have been different in their own day. What once existed seems no longer applicable. And by this rationale, they are able to *reinterpret* the Bible for their own personal advantage.

Thinking back upon the textual material given earlier, you will recall that all the patriarchs chosen of God for specific works were absolutely faithful. They abode *within the limits* which God had imposed. They did only the work for which they were chosen. They neither added to nor subtracted from it.

As mentioned earlier, Moses was true to his call. He thereby typified the coming of Christ and the establishment of the spiritual dispensation (see Heb. 3, also Ex. 3:7–10 and 7:6, 20).

Though there were many prophets who assumed and arrogated power and authority to themselves, resisting the true prophets whom God sent to warn specific peoples, the faithful servants remained completely within the confines and limits of the responsibilities which God imposed upon them. If they were sent to a city, that is where they went. If the message forewarned of a specific calamity, that is precisely what they delivered. They did not go to the wrong city, or the wrong people, with the wrong message. Carefully study the following: Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 23:28 and 1:7, 9; Ezekiel 13:3, 10–16.

Christ abode within the limits of His Father's assignment (John 6:38; 14:10; 18:37; Matt. 15:24). Not only do we have the historic example of *His* faithfulness, but by faith we have the assurance that He will continue to be faithful to the will and purpose of His Father (compare Acts 3:19–21 and 1 Cor. 15:24–29).

With the exception of Judas, the original twelve apostles remained faithful in every respect. The writings of these apostles attest to that fact. Even John, years after the death of all the other original apostles, was writing about that same imperative need. But, unfortunately, few people took heed. The many of that day, as is true in our time, did not remain stable and strong in faith. They departed from the truth which had been proclaimed to them and for which they were accountable. Notice the charge which Christ gave to His disciples (Matt. 10:7, 13–14, 27).

There is evidence that, in the last days, the chosen ministers of God will not remain faithful to the message or to the limiting responsibilities (Micah 3:5–11; Matt. 7:15 and 24:42–51). While a few will remain faithful, the majority will not. Due to vanity of mind and desire for position, some whom God holds responsible will reject His will.

It is a fearful thing to presume, arrogating position and responsibility to self. Servants must be *called* by God. They must be trained, and the message must be given to them. Then they must patiently await the commission—the sending—of God. God alone knows the times when, and the peoples to whom, He wants the message sent. Paul could not make his own determinations, in the days of his ministry: he had to await direction from the Holy Spirit, before he could proceed to certain cities and countries. Today, the same patience must be exercised. We must not presume either responsibility or time.

### **Presumption Is Never Acceptable to God**

How well we must remember the Biblical example of Saul! He was chosen to be king of God's own people, Israel. He became a prophet by the will of God. But in his own impatience and human arrogance, he assumed the responsibility of the priesthood. After a second mistake, he was rejected by God. He was not allowed to be the progenitor of those who would continue in the office for which he was initially chosen. That lot fell to a faithful and obedient servant of both God and Saul (1 Sam. 13:8–14).

Who can forget the example of Israel? That nation was called to do the will of God and to become an example to the rest of the world. But they saw only *themselves* and their own will, and desired to be like the world around them (1 Sam. 8:7, 19–20; 10:19; 12:12–25). And, ever since, Israel has paid the price of that presumption.

God is against all who presume. How tragic for one to fall into the hands of the living God in His wrath! Presumptive servants will be dealt with severely. They presume a commission. They generate a message. They determine their own times. They make others to hope they will be able to deliver something valuable. But their words are vain and

useless. Compare the following texts: Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 13:4, 6–7, 14–16; Jeremiah 14:13–16, 23:32, 27:13–15; Zechariah 13:2–3. As there were false prophets in historical times, so shall there be false teachers in our own time (2 Pet. 2:1). How did they become false teachers? By generating false doctrine. That is, after God had revealed the true doctrine, false doctrine emerged and was accepted. What were the results? The majority of the people followed error because of specific individuals. For Peter said: ". . . many shall *follow* their pernicious ways; *by reason of whom* the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Pet. 2:2).

Christ dared not presume. He said: "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" (John 9:4). What were the works which He was assigned to perform? The words and commands of the Father—not one other thing! And what was the substantiation of His duty? Faithful performance of the work which the Father had given to Him (John 10:25).

In exactly the same manner (with the exception of Judas, as mentioned earlier), the twelve apostles were faithful to their assignment. The twelve went principally to the nations of Israel. Whereas, the Apostle Paul was later called and sent to the Gentiles. The Biblical record proves them faithful.

Man is to live by every word of God—the complete Bible. The contents of that Bible are largely examples of past relationships which characterize specific problem areas (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11). Those examples speak loud and clear to all who understand and are responsive to the *authority* of the Bible. Those words are for you and me today. Since God and Christ *do not change*, those examples speak loud and clear the message that men must wait patiently for God—that they must never presume or take unto themselves office, title, or position. God will call and send in His own time. He will call whom *He* pleases.

In summary, then, tragic results become obvious when men begin to presume. Presumptive leaders are afforded the opportunity of misusing people because the people themselves fail to fulfill their God-given responsibilities. These presumptive leaders prevail because they arrogate to themselves too much responsibility. The people suffer because they assume this is the way it should be. Either presumption leads to problems. Because of these *assumptions*, many fruits of rebellion begin to emerge.

For the real lesson in this series of *Monthly Letters*, the next point under consideration will be most revealing. It will come in next month's letter, God willing.

Dearly beloved of God, our prayers are constantly with you. We love, admire, and respect you for the faithfulness which you have manifested. We know that the love of God is with you daily.

Please be praying about the Feast of Tabernacles. It is our hope that God will grant us another glorious and meaningful occasion. But times are critical. Many conditions are beginning to emerge. These things will adversely affect us, ultimately. Therefore, we need your fervent prayers. Thank you for them. We look forward to seeing all.

Again, all our love. You are ever in our thoughts.

In deep love and respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the text "In deep love and respect,".

Raymond C. Cole