

IF YOU ARE GODS

If you are God's you have placed God above all. Only those who do this may enjoy a vital relationship with Him. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind- nothing less will meet with His approval. (Matthew 22:37) This is your first and foremost duty- God above all! This is not easy! It never was. Through the ages, the world, the flesh and the Devil have conspired against such singular devotion. In the past, placing God above all required sufficient courage to endure cruel persecutions. Frequently it meant severe suffering and even death. So it was in pagan times and So it continued to be in allegedly Christian times.

Today it seems So different! But is it really? Religion has become fashionable for a people dwelling in comfort and abundance. You have heard it said that it makes no difference to what Church you go So long as you go to the Church of your choice. Church- going is fashionable; nearly everybody belongs! Why be different? Is this God's appeal to *your* heart, or is this man's appeal to your weakness to conform? It is the latter!

It is man who tells you to go to the church of your choice. God leaves you no choice. He says, 'There is one body, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.' (Ephesians 4:4- 6) If, therefore, God is to be worshipped and placed above all, we must arise and seek the 'one body, one Spirit, one hope one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.'

To put God above all when paganism was popular meant opposition. To do So when the Papacy reigned meant opposition. Has it suddenly happened that it no longer means opposition? Could it be that everyone has now decided to put God above all and all we have to do is conform to devout society?

Society is still united against the faithful. You will be marked as an extremist if you insist on weeding out tradition, errors, and human philosophies from your worship of the true and living God. Quickly you will be told that nobody knows what the Bible really teaches and that you are better off just accepting what the clergy present since they should know best. Many feel that it makes no difference what you believe So long as you do good and live decently; that is all that counts. These and other misleading and hurtful arguments will be hurled at you if you indicate an intention of fathoming God's will for you. If you are like most people, you will succumb to these arguments and conform- just be another

person who endeavors to worship a God he doesn't really know and believe something or anything just So it is generally accepted.

But not So if you are God's! The Bible says, 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:24) Adoring worship is not enough. You must worship in 'spirit and in truth.' God is not interested in any other form of worship. Men have said that nobody can really know God's truth and God's plan of the ages, but God promises to open to those who sincerely 'knock.' 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.' - Hebrews 11:6

God is the most intelligent Being in the universe. He is the author of intelligence. Yet, in most religious worship, traditions and ceremony are emphasized. What little doctrine is found is reduced to a memorization of certain confessions of faith. Everyone is called a believer but few know what they believe and fewer still know why. Human intelligence is encouraged to free expression in all other fields but seems to have diminished in the present mass religious appeal. This lack of study, knowledge and true understanding is covered with a blanket of good works- as though Christianity were merely a do- good religion. No one has the right to do wrong. Everyone, whether Christian or otherwise, has a responsibility to do good. The true Christian, in placing God above all, goes further- dedicating his life to know and to preach God's truth.

The Bible does outline His truth. Creation, not blind evolution is the Bible's opening claim for man. Created perfect, man soon succumbed to temptation and sinned. Death, the penalty for sin followed. The unborn race in Adam shared in the condemnation. All were lost, committed to the sorrows and heartaches of life under sin, pain and finally death.

In due time Jesus came to ransom Adam and his family from death. God's justice was satisfied to accept Jesus' sacrificed perfect human life for the release of condemned Adam and all his children. Therefore, all that was lost because of Adam's sin will be restored to man. God's favor and perfect life will again belong to man.

This restoration and salvation awaits the Kingdom to come on earth. Then Christ shall raise the dead and deliver men from the bondage of death, ushering them into the glorious privileges of the sons of God. While the Kingdom waits its due time, God is

selecting and preparing those who shall live and reign with Christ when the Kingdom does come to earth.

This outline of God's plan was the faith once delivered to the saints, and which was beclouded early in Church history. Not until the Reformation did the quest for truth and reform seek again this faith of the saints. - Jude 3

Reformation

The Reformation that sought to remove creedal errors and practices by a return to the oracles of God's Word has all but died. The new look is that of extreme religious tolerance- not because brotherly affections have increased, but because it is the only way for divided churches to unite into federated strength to become a world power like that of the mother church. Certainly tolerance is good. True Christians never did nor ever will persecute anyone. Persecution stems from the spirit of antichrist. Acceptance of error is quite another matter! Contradictory teachings mean unquestionably that someone is wrong. Should judgment and discernment cease to exist for the sake of unity? Unity with serious errors can be a dangerous combination. The Reformation came about because the faithful reformers such as Luther, Melancton and others wanted the pure truth. They obeyed God and His Word instead of the then united Church. It was the quest for truth that brought the divisions. To try to create unity without finding it first in the truth of God's Word is wrong and a rejection of the Reformation principles.

No man who loves God above all would ever allow another person to do his studying for him. If the Reformation's cry 'the priesthood of all believers' were practiced, each Christian would become a minister to study and teach under the ordination that God alone bestows. (Isaiah 61:1- 3) The Christians of Berea were exemplary in this respect, 'they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.' (Acts 17:11) This sincerity, commended So highly in the Bereans of old, is scarcely found today when someone else's word is good enough in religion.

Sincere Christians often lament the worldliness in their Church, or the commercial atmosphere that overshadows their worship. They often confess the sad lack of doctrinal teaching from the pulpit. Everywhere it is apparent that, while Church attendance and revenues are high, real Christianity is fading like a flower in the modern Church.

The Wheat and Tares

There was a time when God was satisfied to let the true Christians and the imitation Christians dwell together. That day is no more! Study Matthew 13:24- 30, 37- 43. This account covers the parable of the Wheat (true Christians) and Tares (imitation Christians). Tares, at times, look very much like wheat but produce nothing of value.

In this parable, Jesus identified himself as the one who sowed the good seed. He said, 'the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the (heavenly) kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world (properly translated age).' This teaches that God was willing to allow the true and imitation Christians to be together until the 'harvest' which is the end of the age. Then he would separate them and gather those that are His to the heavenly garner and the imitations are 'burned' or destroyed to the condition of false profession.

The lesson of the parable is plain. The separation of the 'wheat' from the 'tares' is at the 'end of the age.' That time is now. According to Jesus, the end of the age was to be a time when there would be 'distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.' (Luke 21:25,26) With intercontinental ballistic missiles, hydrogen bombs, germ and radiation pollution facing a hate- filled world, there is little question that this is 'the end of the age.' For Christians this means a time of separation, an unwillingness to be grouped with those who are not wholeheartedly God's. It is a time for searching investigation of the heart and also a searching investigation of God's word to know the present work of God and the present course of the faithful surrounded by a thousand lukewarm

Christians on one side and ten thousand imitation Christians on the other. - Psalms 91:7

We now see the 'binding' of the 'tares' into 'bundles' taking place. From everywhere people are being gathered into sects, denominations, organizations and cults. Under this irresistible mass appeal to conform, the 'binding into bundles' continues against the hour when the 'fire' of trial shall try every man's work of what sort it is. - 1 Corinthians 3:13- 15

'Come Out of Her, My People'

The lesson of the parable of The Wheat and Tares is that we are in the time of harvest, and that the harvest is a time of separation- the 'wheat' from the 'tares' or more plainly the true Christians from the pretenders. Even more forceful and persuasive is the prophetic word on this matter.

In Revelation 18:2- 4 we hear this message: 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, (from God's favor) For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'

Some straightforward reasoning simplifies this lesson. Literal Babylon had fallen some 600 years previous to the time that this prophecy was uttered ruling out its application to literal Babylon. This 'Babylon' affected the nations of earth with the 'wine of the wrath of her fornication.' This depicts 'Babylon' as a harlot and the rulers of earth as her paramours. Revelation 18:13 states, among other things, that she merchandised the 'souls of men.' And Revelation 18:23 tells that once the 'light of a candle' shown there. Finally Revelation 18:24 fixes her guilt in pronouncing her hands covered with the 'blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.'

In the days of the Reformation there was no question about who this 'Babylon' was. There was only one Church that could possibly

fulfill this description. Only one Church had and has continued to have such universal influence and carried on such heavy traffic. Only one Church had access to the 'candlelight' of the Holy Bible and was within the hearing of the cries of the 'bridegroom,' Jesus, and the 'bride,' his faithful. Finally, only one Church was So cruel and unremitting in her bitter persecution of those who would not submit to its dictates.

God's will for true Christians was and still is that they should be separate from the world. Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' (John 18:36) James tells us, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' (James 1:27) Not that true Christianity is unsympathetic to the world and its problems. Not that they do not long to see the world of mankind lifted up and blessed. Far from this! The gospel which was first preached to Abraham promised a blessing to 'all the families of the earth' and the Apostle Peter tells when this shall be. 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.' (Genesis 12:3; Acts 3:19- 21) The true Christian knows that the day of blessing and the day of 'refreshing' and 'restitution of all things' must await the return of the Lord. It is then that Christ sets up his Kingdom. It is then that Christ removes the Kingdoms of this world, both the civil and religious ruling power of earth, replacing them with a new civil and religious ruling power.

Originally, all Christians held to this view. They knew their part and lot was not to try to remake the Kingdoms of this world in to the Kingdom of God. They knew they were not to enter the world's politics, nor to enter its wars. They knew far better than to incite wars and to lead bloody crusades in the name of Christ. They knew their allegiance was to Christ and his coming Kingdom. Until he returned they were to wait as 'espoused virgins.' They believed that Jesus would return and receive his faithful followers as his beloved 'bride.' Then together 'the Spirit and the bride say, Come...And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' (Revelation 22:17) True Christianity still continues to cling to this message.

Many in the early church tired of waiting for their Lord to return and accepted instead the opportunity to unite with the kings of the

earth. In So doing the Church became unfaithful to her Lord and became a harlot. In Revelation 17:5 she is referred to as the 'mother of harlots.' This infers that her 'daughters' are 'harlots' and So we see other churches following Papacy's unfaithful course, and polluting themselves in the politics of the world's governments. This unholy union is called Christendom or Christ's Kingdom.

But this is not the Kingdom. Do not believe it. Where on earth is God's will being done? Where is God's will being done in the churches? How long will we be deluded into thinking that this is the Kingdom? The Kingdom will only be a reality when Jesus, the 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords' reigns in power and great glory upon the earth. This great King will have no part in present civil or religious governments of earth. He has promised to 'make all things new.' See Revelation 21:5; Daniel 2:44.

Your Responsibility

This brings us to the most important matter. What shall you do if you are God's? Certainly the day is past when true Christians are expected to reform the churches. That has already been tried. (Jeremiah 51:9) Babylon will not 'be healed.' Only one course remains. 'Forsake her' - 'Come out of her, my people.' Not only are his people directed to come out but the Lord in his mercy warns that those who do not come out will receive of her plagues. This means the wayward of his people shall share the sorrow and affliction shortly to come on 'Babylon.' When everyone is urging church attendance, God is calling his faithful to come out. True Christianity has never had the world's approval! The course of God's people has always been and continues to be opposite to that of the world. James foretold this saying, 'Know ye not that friendship with the world is the enemy of God.' (James 4:4) Inasmuch as the church is in league and friendship with the world, in its politics, in its social affairs, in its economics, God must call His people out. But where can they go?

In their hast many have left the larger churches and joined smaller ones. Many have left the smaller churches and joined religious organizations. Although these smaller churches and organizations are less worldly they still retain many of the creedal errors of

Babylon. God has never called his saints to join an organization. His calling is, as the Psalmist So beautifully expressed it, 'Gather my saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.' - Psalms 50:5

Yet true Christians love to meet and study God's Word together. This has led many into Bible Classes of various groups. Somehow there remains little liberty in most Bible Classes for searching study and discussion. Actually one of the tests of liberty and a test also which indicates whether the group we meet with is not a part of Babylon, is- can your understanding of the Scriptures be heard even though it is contrary to the fixed teachings of the group?

Have you ever considered a Bible study of your own- in your own home- taking some Bible topic and finding out all that the scriptures say on the topic, using Bible helps and concordances, and experiencing the blessing of proving all things, and holding fast to that which is good? (1 Thessalonians 5:21) We urge you to do this if you are one of the Lord's. Private study will enhance your enjoyment in meeting with other students of the Word who are still to be found. Comparing your findings and fellowshiping with those who have placed God above all is rewarding indeed.

In seeking Bible helps, many of the Lord's people individually and collectively, have found the book, 'The Divine Plan of the Ages' a key to understanding the truth of God's Word. It places at your fingertips the simplest and most effective means of study- a topical scripture- by- scripture outline of God's plan for man from Eden to eternity. Nothing ever written for thinking Christians more graphically unfolds the 66 books of the Bible. The promise- by- promise story of man's fall and walk and final restoration to favor with His Creator are examined. The difference between the kingdoms of this world and the promised Kingdom of God are compared (Chapters 14 and 15).

Be sure to send for it! Here is a message that will linger in your heart as you continue to fulfill your present responsibility to God and to your fellow Christians.