

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 38

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

(continued)

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which *say they are Jews, and are not*, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9).

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the *concision*. For *we are the circumcision*, which *worship God in the spirit*, and *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, and have *no confidence in the flesh*" (Phil. 3:2-3). This passage is taken from Paul's epistle to the Philippians. In the course of Paul's inspired admonition to the saints in Philippi he states, "Beware of the concision." The word "concision" is an ironical expression which means mere "mutilation," that is, to cut off an essential part of; to render imperfect; to maim; to cut up; to destroy. It refers to the ritual of circumcision.

Through the entire period of Paul's ministry, he constantly waged warfare against a class of believers known as Judaizers. These Judaizers were actually Jews who made it their business to follow around in the places where Paul had ministered, creep into the midst of the believers who were both Jews and Gentiles after the flesh, whom Paul had founded on the truth, and defile these believers by proclaiming error and persuading them that in order to truly please God they must be circumcised and keep the laws given to Israel. By so doing, the law became the rule by which they measured their righteousness! They were placing their confidence of righteousness in the works of the flesh, in external observances, the things which they could or could not do, rather than in the power of CHRIST'S INDWELLING LIFE.

We find the description of these Judaizers in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. They were from Judea (Acts 15:1). They were "Pharisees which believed" (Acts 15:5). They had belonged to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). They were, or had been, in fellowship with the twelve apostles. We learn these facts in Acts 15:1-2: "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved...therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them." "But!" one may exclaim, "what possible harm could be done simply by being circumcised and keeping some tenets of the law?" In answer we hear the words of the apostle Paul, "Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that IF YE BE CIRCUMCISED, Christ shall profit

you **nothing**. For I testify again to **every man** that is circumcised, that he is debtor to do the **whole law**. Christ is become of **no effect** unto you, **whosoever of you** are justified by the **law**; ye are **FALLEN FROM GRACE**! For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but *faith* which worketh by *love*" (Gal. 5:1-6).

Those Judaizers who taught legalism, law, and works, were those of whom Paul spoke when he cried out, "Beware of the concision." Beware of the *concision*! Beware of the *mutillators*! Watch out for those who would mutilate your body by cutting off the foreskin of your flesh, while in actuality they are mutilating, cutting off, and making maim your standing in Christ by grace, making your *faith void* and of *no effect* through trust in the righteousness of the law. For says the apostle, "Thy circumcision is made uncircumcision," and again, "circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the *spirit*, and *not* in the letter (law); whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. 2:25,29). How clear that our circumcision is *spiritual*, in the heart and spirit of the *inner man*; but if we put confidence in the flesh we then cancel out that which is spiritual, life, and reality!

The Philippian church most certainly consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. The first convert was Lydia, who was a Jewess (Acts 16:14). Then followed the case of the girl possessed with a spirit of divination. Paul cast out the spirit, and undoubtedly the girl was saved. In Acts 16:19-21 we learn that her masters were Romans, which means in all probability that the girl was also Roman. Then followed the conversion of the Philippian jailer, who most certainly was a Gentile. It is only reasonable to conclude that the greater part of the Philippian church was Gentile proselytes to Judaism or pagans, as were the other churches founded by Paul who was the apostle to the nations.

Now note carefully what Paul says to these believers, most of whom were Gentile converts. "WE are the circumcision!" And oh, that the Lord's people today might learn this simple, yet immensely important truth! "**WE** (both Israelite and Gentile) are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have **NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH**!" (Phil. 3:3). It is high time for us to understand that natural birth has nothing at all to do with being of the circumcision, the called and chosen elect of God! Circumcision marks those who *are His*! And the only circumcision God recognizes is of the *heart*, in the *spirit*! "Except a man be *born again* he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Natural lineage from the house of Judah, the house of Israel, or any other race or people has nothing whatever to do with making us the called and chosen elect of God! **WE** are the circumcision who have **no confidence** in the **flesh**! But we, Jew, Israelite, Gentile, rich, poor, free, bond, male, female, worship God *in the spirit* through the circumcision of our hearts by faith!

We might write for the next fifty years concerning the glorious truths of sonship and the kingdom of God, but no factor of this truth is more solemn or of greater import than the words of our Lord wherein He stated, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth *nothing*" (Jn. 6:63). Notice that Jesus did not say that the flesh profits a little, or is the first prerequisite, or has a small advantage, or that the flesh gives you a head start towards sonship. Oh, no! He said plainly, "The flesh profiteth **N-O-T-H-I-N-G**!" It is vain and foolish to trust in the flesh, and John the Baptist put it rather succinctly, "And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father..." (Lk. 3:8). So you have Abraham for your father! That fact isn't worth a hill of

beans! That fact will not make you a son of God, it will not get you into the kingdom, nor will it enable you to inherit the promises! In order to qualify as the Israel of God we must be quickened by the Spirit of God, worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, have a circumcision of our heart by the operation of God, and have no confidence at all in the flesh!

John went on to say, “for I say unto you, That God is able of these *stones* to raise up children unto Abraham!” Now let me ask you, precious friend of mine, if God is able of *stones* to raise up children unto Abraham, should it be thought a thing incredible or impossible or even implausible that He should of the *Gentiles* raise up seed to Abraham? Because men walk in the natural and are thus incapable of grasping spiritual realities, even though they may profess to be spiritual, we have on every hand those who think of Israel almost wholly on the natural plane. They think with carnal minds about Jews or the ten-tribed House of Israel. There are those even in this message of the kingdom who entertain the crude notion that unless you are a fleshly member of the so-called lost tribes of the House of Israel, you cannot be a manifest son! I verily believe that there is sufficient evidence that the peoples of Northwestern Europe and their descendants pertain to the ten-tribed House of Israel which migrated across Europe from Assyria in ancient times. It’s an interesting study!

I have, however, no hesitation whatever in saying to all who read these lines, the precious black brethren in Africa, the brethren in Latin America, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, and all the other nations, ethnic groups, and diverse cultures who cherish the beautiful hope of sonship — WE, ALL of us — whatever the color of our skin or our national identity — WE are the Israel of God! WE are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and have **no confidence in the flesh!** WE are the kingdom of God, who have been **born from above!** WE are the kings and priests of His kingdom! WE are the elect! WE are the saviours coming up on mount Zion! WE are the many-membered Christ! WE are God’s chosen people! WE are the sons of God! And it is not because of our national or blood lines, but altogether by grace through faith. “They which are of *faith*, the same are the children of Abraham.” Do you believe it?

The Jews may certainly be of the people of the Old Covenant. That covenant has been abolished because the people broke that covenant! The Old Covenant is no covenant at all, for it has forever been *done away*. It has been nullified since Christ came and brought into the earth the new order of the Spirit! The only way *anyone*, Jew, Israelite, or Gentile can be in a *covenant relationship* with God is through the New Covenant. All other covenants have been voided! There is no other covenant but CHRIST!

All who partake of this circumcision of which Jesus is the minister, are the true Israel of God. And so, contrary to popular belief, the natural Jew is, in reality, no Jew at all! That is, if the word of God means anything at all! And it does. Hear ye! “He is *not* a Jew, which is one outwardly (in the flesh); neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he *is* a Jew, which is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter” (Rom. 2:28-29). The testimony is sure: He is NOT a Jew, which is one *outwardly* in the flesh! But he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*, in the heart and spirit, REGARDLESS OF WHAT HE IS IN THE FLESH. That is the gospel truth. That is the New Covenant! The inner man of the new creation is unaffected by what a man is outwardly, in the flesh. He has no confidence in the flesh, but worships God in his spirit. And, I might add, he is NOT an Anglo-Saxon-Celtic Israelite, who

is one *outwardly*, in the flesh! But he is an Israelite indeed, which is one inwardly, in the spirit. Do you believe it? (For an in-depth study of this subject you may request our booklet titled ABRAHAM'S BOSOM).

Those who say they are, and without doubt are, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who call themselves Jews and Israelites are nothing more than counterfeits and frauds. The real Jew and the real Israelite is one who is truly of *the seed* of Abraham through faith. Not by natural blood, but by the transfusion of the blood (life) of the Christ, who Himself is *the seed* (singular) of Abraham! It is all by faith, the faith of Abraham. Therefore, all who call themselves the seed of Abraham, or the circumcision, or Jews, or Israelites, without being *born of the Spirit*, are bastards, or as our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the devil." Therefore the Lord says to His called out elect, the church in Smyrna, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, and I know the blasphemy of them which *say they are Jews, and are not*, but are the synagogue of Satan." Ah, now we UNDERSTAND! And again He says, "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which *say they are Jews, and are not*, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before *thy* feet, and to know that I have loved *thee*" (Rev. 3:9).

In this present hour we hear much of the Jews who are outward in the flesh. A remnant of these outward Jews has returned to the land of Palestine over the past century and has carved out there the modern state of Israel. Many Christians speak ecstatically about the prophecies that are being fulfilled in relation to the Jewish nation. Many live in excited expectation of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the reinstatement of the temple worship with its sacrificial offerings and ceremonial rituals of the law. Then follow the dire predictions of the rise of the antichrist who is supposed to make a covenant with the Jews, have the whole world at his feet, and sit AS GOD in that wonderful temple. Many people are feverishly working day and night for the salvation of the Jews. But I must tell you, my beloved, the return of the outward Jews, the formation of the state of Israel, the seizure of Jerusalem, the fervent prayers at the wailing wall notwithstanding, the counsel of God standeth sure, the truth is as absolute and incontrovertible as it was the day heaven breathed the revelation into the illumined mind of the apostle of Jesus Christ — HE IS N-O-T A JEW WHO IS ONE O-U-T-W-A-R-D-L-Y; BUT HE I-S A JEW WHO IS ONE I-N-W-A-R-D-L-Y!

Let us not have our understanding distorted. Many are loudly proclaiming that the ending of the church age heralds the beginning of THE SUPREMACY OF THE JEWISH STATE OF ISRAEL as the instrument of God's kingdom on earth for the next one thousand years. I tell you today by the Spirit of the Lord — *it won't happen!* Thank God that He shall, indeed, save the Jews! Thank God that He shall also save **all nations** as He pours out His Spirit upon all flesh! And so shall be fulfilled that which is written: "Look unto me, and *be ye saved*, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, EVERY TONGUE SHALL SWEAR (ALLEGIANCE)" (Isa. 45:22-23). And again, "ALL NATIONS which Thou hast made shall come and WORSHIP BEFORE THEE, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name" (Ps. 86:9).

I do not doubt for one moment that the Lord is regathering the house of Judah to the land of Israel for a day of *national salvation*. That does not mean, however, that they shall then occupy some favored position in the kingdom of God! Truly I say to you, it is not given to the outward

Jews, who *say* they are Jews, but *are not*, to rule the world in righteousness, administer the affairs of God's kingdom on earth, and to bless all nations. They cannot circumvent the word of the Lord Jesus to them two millenniums ago! "Behold, your house (kingdom) is left unto you desolate. Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall **betaken from you**, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Mat. 23:38; 21:43). There will be a day for the Jews as a whole to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. What a day that will be! It will come through the ministry of the sons of God in glorious manifestation. It should be clear, however, to every spiritual mind that there is a world of difference between being *saved* and *ruling* as a son of God in the kingdom! Salvation is a *gift* of free grace; but the *high calling* of God in Christ Jesus is a *prize* to be won!

There are qualifications involved in winning the prize! "To him that *overcometh* will I give power over the nations." "To him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne." "If we *suffer with Him*, we shall also *reign with Him*." The Jewish people through two thousand years of God's dealing with His called and chosen elect have *never suffered with Him* nor have they *overcome*. They have suffered, rather, shame and disgrace and indignities of all kinds because of their rejection of Him! They reject Him still. They despise Him still. They hate Him, even today. They will not have "that man" to rule over them! They have flunked every test and missed every opportunity to *qualify* for world rule! Therefore they won't reign with Him. In the age and the ages to come they will not reign over anything. The fig tree is cursed. The Old Covenant is abolished. They were indeed *called* and *chosen*. But they were not *faithful*! "The Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are *called*, and *chosen*, and *faithful*" (Rev. 17:14).

All that be Jews in spirit, inwardly, are breaking down the imaginations of their hearts, and the evil of their carnal mind, and their earthly wisdom, and their knowledge, and their understanding, and all the images and idols of their hearts, and all the foolishness of the religious church systems, by the *spirit of sonship* which God has given them, that they may offer to the Lord a sacrifice and an offering in His temple, which temple *ye are*. The Jews in the spirit are beyond and higher than all the outward Jews in the flesh and their outward offerings in their outward temple, and the offerings of the Jews in spirit render base and worthless all the outward Jews' offerings that be outward and carnal, to do that which is inward and spiritual.

The outward Jews ate of their natural offerings in the outward temple; and so the Jews in the spirit do eat of their offering, Christ, in their temple within, and of their sacrifices, and then they praise God in their temple. The outward Jews' lamp always did burn in their temple, and never went out; and they were to trim their lamps in their temple; so likewise the Jews in the spirit — their lamps of divine illumination and spiritual revelation, the *living word of God*, are never to go out, but always to burn in their temple; and they are to trim and dress them so that they become a *royal priesthood* unto God, always attending in the service of the Lord in the temple, morning and evening, offering in the spirit the nature of the Lamb without blemish in the temple: and so the Jews in the spirit are morning and evening offering in the Lamb's spirit, in their temple, which is their bodies, the life, glory, and victory of the Lamb of God! They shall eat of their Lamb in their temple until His incorruptible life is raised up in them fully and there is no more death!

There were priests to eat of the showbread in the outward temple, and the showbread was always to be in the temple on the table; and so the Jews in the spirit always have their fresh bread, the present truth and reality of God's word, in their temple, to eat of it; and they are a spiritual household, and a royal priesthood unto God. And the incense and the sweet odors were to burn in the outward temple; and so the Jews in spirit always have the odors of the fragrance of *His presence* and the incense of *their worship, praise, and prayers* in the spirit and by the spirit to burn in their temple. And the Jews in the flesh were not to touch anything, nor eat anything that was unclean; no more do the Jews in the spirit touch or handle anything of the flesh, the world, the devil, or the abominations of man's religion, but they *handle Christ* in the spirit, and *feed upon Him* in the spirit, who is pure, and holy, and clean, and eternal, who is the *bread of life*.

Under the covenant of the law they were not to touch the dead, if they did they were unclean; which is a figure to God's called and chosen elect that *walk in the Spirit*, they are not to touch the dead ways of the world, nor the death of the carnal mind, nor the dead body of the flesh, nor yet the dead doctrines, methods, programs and outward observance of the carnal church systems wherein is no life; but to touch CHRIST WITH THEIR SPIRIT and HIS LIVING FLESH which He has given for our life. Therefore those called to sonship do not touch any unclean thing, only the living and the clean, that which is *spirit* and that which is *life*; for the earth is corrupted with the dead carcasses of former moves of God from which His Spirit has fled, and His life departed, which have now become lifeless ministries; and the *flesh thereof* makes it stink, and the people smell thereof and are contaminated thereby. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my *sons* and my *daughters*, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:17). "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

The Jews outward were not to follow and feed upon any offering but their own; and so the Jews in the spirit are to follow no offering but Christ, and feed upon Him who is their own. Christ is the altar that all offer upon that offer up to God spiritual sacrifices: which altar is in the temple of the body. And all who quench the spirit of Christ within themselves, or substitute some external thing for the inward anointing, and suffer not the life of the indwelling Christ to arise and live through them, are such as *watch the sepulcher of Christ*, and are afraid that Christ should *arise*! I firmly believe that it is time to leave the shadowy imperfect *outward observances* and ordinances of the old order church systems which are borrowed and brought over from the outward observances of the Old Covenant, and begin to lay hold upon those spiritual and eternal realities which belong to *the kingdom of God within us*. Truly I say unto you that all who live by anything other than *the Christ within* are indeed those of whom the Lord spake, those who *say they are Jews, but are not!*

THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

"I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the *synagogue of Satan*" (Rev. 2:9).

Christians generally associate Satan with all the evil in the world and the gross sins of the flesh. This, however, is an error of significant proportions! Every time — as far as I have seen it written in the scriptures — Satan, the devil, that ancient serpent has to do with **religion** — with **spiritual** and **heavenly things**! At every turn this infamous creature is seen busily engaged in steering people away from the Spirit of God; hindering the Lord's people in their fulfilling the will of God; persecuting them because of their testimony; accusing them before God; deceiving them by transforming himself into an angel of light; and sifting, trying, testing them that they may be strengthened, purified, and perfected.

Satan works through the carnal mind, but the *spiritual realm* is his arena and *heavenly things* are his concern! Satan is not some hideous creature impishly stoking coals in the depths of the underworld. Oh, no! Satan is *religious*! Satan has a *synagogue*! Satan has a *pulpit*! Satan has a *church*! The church of Satan is not the one we hear so much about with weird rituals and midnight sacrifices under the full moon. This may seem strange to some who read these lines, but as we examine the scriptures in the light that the Spirit brings we see clearly the truth of it. We do not meet Satan anywhere in the scriptures in the blood and brutality of war, in desolating famine, in the drunken stupor of the barroom, in the sensuality of the harlot's house, at the scene of some dastardly crime, or in the midst of any other of the dark evils of mankind. Oh, no!

We meet Satan first in the lovely garden of Eden, the garden of the Lord's planting (Gen. 3:1). The next time we see him he is standing up against Israel, provoking David to disobey the Lord by numbering Israel (I Chron. 21:1-2). That was a *religious* act, the carnal mind seeking comfort in numbers, rather than total reliance upon the Lord! The third time we find Satan he is in the presence of all God's sons, presenting himself before the Lord, reporting for duty (Job 1:6-7)! Then he became the instrument of testing for righteous Job, which testing was initiated by the Lord, not Satan! In the Psalms Satan is an agent of God for judgment (Ps. 109:6-7). The last time we find Satan in the Old Testament he is standing next to Joshua (Jesus) the high priest, *resisting Him* in His intercession for Israel (Zech. 3:1-2). And that is *all* we read about Satan in the Old Testament! Interesting, isn't it? In the New Testament he first appears with Christ in the wilderness, quoting scripture, preaching his doctrine, just as he did with Eve in the garden (Mat. 4:1-11). Later, he is the instrument of God for the destroying of the flesh and carnality of believers who walk after the flesh (I Cor. 5:5; II Cor. 12:7). He transforms himself into an angel of light (spiritual illumination) (II Cor. 11:14). Finally, he appears with an army of strong and mighty angels in heaven as the accuser of the Lord's brethren (Rev. 12:3-9).

You see, my friend, Satan is nowhere in scripture associated with pornography, sexual deviation, promiscuity, or any other dark sin of the flesh — Satan is always **RELIGIOUS**! Oh, yes, he is a murderer and a liar — but these activities are in a *realm of spirit*, not in the *works of the flesh*. Cain, the scripture says, was *of that wicked one* when he slew his brother Abel. But you see, that first murder was not committed as the result of an argument in a bar over a woman — it was about *God's acceptance or rejection of a sacrifice*! It was a *religious murder*! And Satan's first lie was not that he was "working late at the office" when in fact he was out with another woman — his lie was just this, "Hath God said? God doth know...you shall not surely die!" It is a religious lie, a *spiritual deception*! Satan lies about God! He lies about truth! He lies about God's purpose! He lies about *you*! He lies *to you* about heavenly things! He murders righteousness, He

destroys faith, he kills love, he ravages hope, he disputes truth, he crushes obedience and tears down all that is godly and true in Christ Jesus!

The book of Genesis is probably the most important book ever written. The word “genesis” of course means *origin* or *beginning*, and the book of Genesis gives the only true and reliable account of the basic entities and conditions of the universe and of life. Genesis yields vital information concerning the *origin* of ALL THINGS — and therefore the *meaning* of ALL THINGS! Let every man know that in the whole of the universe there is no greater truth than this one sublime truth that THE FUTURE IS BOUND UP IN THE PAST. A man’s belief concerning his origin will inevitably determine his belief about his purpose on earth and his eternal destiny.

The drama of Adam and Eve in the Garden is of supreme importance because it explains the real nature of our life here on earth. It is the portrait of ourselves, our state of being, and how we fashion the environment in which we live. It is the Creator’s instruction manual on spiritual and psychological anatomy. When you thoroughly understand the teaching of the garden of Eden you will understand the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of Satan! This parable is placed at the outset of human history and in the opening scenes of God’s divine record because it is the *foundation* of all understanding, the *blueprint* of man’s experience on earth and his destiny in God.

Adam and Eve in the Garden represent the whole of humanity in the first Adam. They represent you and me and every man and woman who has ever lived or shall live. What happened to them happens to us. What they were we are. Their experience is our experience. Their destiny is our destiny. May the mighty spirit of wisdom and revelation from God give enlightenment to the eyes of your understanding that you may see and know of a truth that what was happening to Adam in the Garden speaks of *spiritual realities* even in the beginning of history, before history, beyond history, and yet in history; it is *we ourselves* of whom the Garden speaks, it is *we ourselves* that are confronted, intended, addressed, accused, expelled, instructed, and redeemed. God Himself is the one who blesses and curses! It is *our* pre-history, truly our own. It is the beginning, innocence, testing, guilt, redemption, and perfection of every one of us. What happened to Adam there is what is happening to us here! Adam and Eve stand for *what* man is, *how* man is, *why* man is.

You would have thought Adam would have had to leave the Garden and go out into outer darkness in order to find Satan. But no! Satan was in the garden of God! What was the serpent doing when Eve met him that fateful day so long ago? Eve did not meet the serpent in a bar — enticing her to get drunk. She did not meet the serpent at a strip-joint — inviting her to become a nude dancer. It was not in the form of a handsome, smooth talking hunk that Satan appeared — tempting her to lust and seducing her to commit adultery. He did not come out of a criminal world to enlist her in a gang of bank robbers, swindlers, or drug runners. Eve wasn’t tempted that day to cuss, smoke, carouse, lie, cheat, or steal. Oh, no! The gross sins of the flesh were in no way involved in Satan’s activity, man’s sin, or his fall! What, then, *was* Satan doing? Why, bless your heart, he was **preaching!** The very first appearance of that ancient serpent was at a **religious meeting!** The discussion was not wine, women, and song — the discussion was about THE WORD OF GOD! It was about SPIRITUAL THINGS! The subject, in fact, was

SONSHIP! “Hath God said?” the serpent hissed. “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye *shall be as gods!*” “Ye shall be as ELOHIM!”

Later we meet Satan in the book of Job. It isn’t in the smoky atmosphere of the underworld that we encounter a fiendish, mocking Satan gleefully stoking the fires of hell while sending forth his imps to incite Job to lust, cheat, kill, lie, and steal. Rather, we read, “Now there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and *Satan came also among them*” (Job 1:6). Satan was among the sons of God in the *presence* of the Lord! No Al Capone or Charles Manson here! Satan appeared, not in the lowlands of the flesh, but in a high realm of the spirit!

What Satan wrought against Job was instigated and ordained by the Lord who carefully marked the bounds of the adversary’s activity. Job was no baby saint, for no one less than God Himself had given testimony that Job was a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil! God had blessed this man with great wealth and a large family. He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses. His household was very great with many hired servants so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. The thing we want to note is that although Job was wealthy in temporal things, rich in spiritual things, and proclaimed *perfect* by the Lord Himself, he had not been “tried by fire” as sons of God must be — he was as yet UNTRIED, UNTESTED, and UNPROVEN. He was just like Adam and Eve in the Garden! He walked with God in the spirit, but was yet *innocent*.

In the midst of Job’s ordeal of affliction and suffering the spirit of prophecy came upon him and he opened his mouth and spake concerning the purpose of God in it all, declaring, “But He knoweth the way that I take: *when He hath tried me*, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). Never do I cease to be amazed at how the preachers and teachers, apparently without exception, join their voices in unison with those of Job’s contemptible comforters, indicting and blaming poor old Job, charging that God brought all these calamities upon him because he had sin in his life, or because he was self-righteous, or because of some other appalling fault in Job. The only reliable testimony we have of Job’s true state of being is that spoken by the Lord Himself, and HE declared that Job was a PERFECT MAN! Perfect, yes; but untried! His perfection remained to be tested, proven, and demonstrated.

Now, what does God do but deliberately hand this perfect and upright man into the hands of Satan to do his worst upon him, only that he should not touch his life. It was because that God desired to *test* Job that He brought forth “the smith to blow upon the fire.” Please note that it was not Satan’s idea to persecute poor old Job! It was God Himself who brought up the subject! There Satan was, presenting himself before the Lord, appearing for duty, if you please, and God asked, “Where have you been?” Satan replied, “Walking up and down in the earth.” “Well, Satan,” the Lord asked, “have you considered my servant Job? Have you noticed that he fears God and eschews evil? Have you noticed that, Satan?” You can be assured, dear ones, that Satan *had* noticed Job, but he wasn’t doing anything to him.

“Doth Job fear God for naught?” Satan retorted. “Hast Thou not made a hedge around him and about his house and about all that he hath on every side?” Praise the Lord! Yes, truly there is

a hedge around the elect of God, and that hedge is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Psalmist recognized and rejoiced in this fact when he said, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, HE IS MY REFUGE and my fortress: my God, in Him will I trust” (Ps. 91:1-2). “You’ve put a hedge around him,” Satan said, “and I can’t get to him!” Then he went on to say, “You must put forth **Thine hand** and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.” But the Lord, who searcheth the reins and the heart, who knoweth them that are His, knows who can be trusted with affliction, and will not allow any to be tested beyond what they are able to bear. He therefore said to Satan, “Behold, all that he hath is in thy power — in thy hand — only upon himself put not forth thine hand.” Later the Lord expanded the area of Satan’s activity and permitted him to touch Job himself, only he must spare his life. With lightning swiftness the misfortunes fell as tribulation and affliction smote this man of God. All hell broke loose upon him! His possessions were gone. His servants were gone. His cattle, his family, and his dwelling place were as though they had never been. And now he was desperately ill, tormented with pain, and without even a bed to sleep on he lies down in the ashes of what was once his beautiful home to listen to the relentless arguments of his friends, monotonously attempting by lengthy speeches to make a fool of him and prove that his present despair was the result of his own sin and disfavor with God.

In one tragic day all Job’s earthly wealth and glory had vanished as a mist before the rising sun. But did Job curse God for all this calamity? Did he even blame the devil? Was he a fair weather saint without spiritual understanding? No, indeed! He rent his mantle, shaved his head, and falling upon the ground, he **WORSHIPPED GOD** with the unmistakable words of reverence, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY; BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD!” Ah, Job *knew* God! He therefore *knew* that in spite of all the external evidence, in spite of how terrible and hopeless things appeared, God had *not* forsaken him, God *did* love him, God *did* see him, God was *concerned* about what happened to him, God was *in control* of everything, God had *purpose* in it all, and God was *just*. Being a perfect man Job understood the nature of God, the ways of God, he knew what God is like — how He is. Armed with this knowledge he was unshakable and unmovable as the hand of Satan moved against him. God won the contest! Job came out the victor! And Satan was defeated!

The great and wonderful truth is just this. Satan was not a wild, mischievous, uncontrollable, psychotic thug running loose around the earth wrecking violence, pestilence, destruction and death on whomsoever he would. The issue here was not a mad, malicious, hateful devil indiscriminately doing horrible things to anyone he decided to attack. That’s not it at all! Satan was on a *spiritual mission* — he was the instrument of *testing*, on behalf of God, of a *son of God*! This was a spiritual battle! This had nothing to do with the gross sins of the flesh. The whole scene is set in a high realm of the spirit! Oh, yes, Satan is — **religious**!

When Jesus came in the flesh, He came into a world steeped in religion. He came into a condition brought about by centuries of teaching the law and the rites and sacrifices of the temple worship. Into this had been woven the traditions of the elders, an accumulation of those same centuries. It had come to include also the washing of pots and cups, together with ceremonies of washing of hands before eating and a multitude of other practices imposed upon the people by their leaders. The temple in the city of Jerusalem was the symbol of all this to the people. Their whole

life revolved around that building and the rites and sacrifices the priests offered in it. It was the sacred spot of the nation and of all Jews wherever they were in the world. Every Jew had that one desire to go to Jerusalem and worship.

This system of religion was imbedded in the lives of the people, and had been for long centuries. It had become a part of their life and they endured it all with the hope perennial within their hearts that some day the Messiah would come and lift not only this yoke, but that of the Roman empire as well. But when the Messiah came, they did not recognize Him. For here was all this great mass of law, ritual, and Pharisaical teaching and tradition, while the Messiah was but an unknown man, of almost unknown origin. Jesus brought a new and revolutionary way of life! It was a way of *believing*, and not a way of *doing*. It was faith in the Christ and right relationship with God in the spirit and did not consist in the doing of anything, or the keeping of external observances. It was simplicity in the highest degree, set up against organized worship of the highest degree. The revolutionary way of life which Jesus brought to the people was in exact and complete opposition to the bondage under which the people now found themselves.

The people were constantly taught and instructed that they must observe all the things the priests and Pharisees told them, or they would perish. Jesus came into their midst and said that all those things would do them absolutely no good whatever, but if they wanted *life* they should *come unto Him and drink* — merely by *believing into Him*! He was placing the Christ and faith in the Christ against all the accumulated traditions of the nation. He was assuring them that they would NOT LOSE A SINGLE THING by coming unto Him, and casting all else away from them. And they would gain *life*! But who could hear such a thing in the day of Christ! In fact, Jesus Himself said that no man could come unto Him, except the Father who had sent Him, would draw that man. It is just as true today! Ah, beloved, should you go into any church on any Sunday and say to the people, “If you will cast aside all your forms, all your traditions, all your rituals, all your ordinances, all your programs, all your cherished and time-honored creeds, all your solemn assemblies, all your myriad activities, all your committees, and SIMPLY COME UNTO THE CHRIST AND BELIEVE INTO HIM AND DRINK OF **HIM**, YOU WILL LOSE NOTHING, but you will gain the glorious and eternal *reality* of God forevermore,” what kind of reception would you receive? You would actually be asking the people to give up *everything they are doing* and all the *things* they have been given by their ministers and church orders with which to serve and worship God — exchanging it all for GOD ALONE! What an unbearable burden it would be for the people to be REDUCED TO GOD! What an unspeakable loss it would be to possess *nothing* but GOD HIMSELF! You would find this an almost impossible thing to accomplish. Truly, Christ has been usurped by — **RELIGION!**

But go with me now into that long ago when Jesus walked the dusty roads with His disciples. He had asked the twelve who they thought He was. Peter promptly answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!” And Jesus said to him, “Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal this unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.” In other words, “This understanding didn’t come from your fleshly mind. You didn’t think this up by yourself. This is not the result of your own reasoning. This came into your spirit from my Father.” So remarkable was this revelation to Peter that the Lord said to him, “*Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona!*” So here we have an instance of the Father working in Peter, imparting His thoughts and understanding to him.

Only minutes later Jesus began to introduce to Peter the subject of His coming suffering and death. The possibility of the death of their beloved Lord was a prospect so foreign to the thinking of the disciples that they were not prepared to comprehend His presentation of this unspeakable fate. Was He not the Messiah? Was He not the Son of God? Did He not come to establish a great kingdom? Were not they, His disciples, to reign with Him in that kingdom? With these questions in mind this talk of *death* was unthinkable and unacceptable!

Then Peter, who had just been pronounced *blessed*, took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Be it far from Thee, Lord: for this shall not be unto Thee!” Ah, when Jesus mentioned the cross and dying, Peter began to rebuke Him. Where did he find the senseless courage that would *dare to rebuke* the Lord? The answer was disturbingly evident — far, far too clear to be a comfort to any of us! The Lord Himself gives us the answer, for, He turned and said to Peter, “Get thee behind me, **Satan!** Thou art an *offense* unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of *God*, but those that be of *men*.” What a shocking way to talk to the great apostle Peter, the one possessing the revelation of Christ’s identity, the one called blessed, the one to whom the Lord had just given the keys to the kingdom of heaven! Atrocious to say to this man of deep revelation and keen spiritual perception, “Thou savorest *not* the things that be of God, but those that be of men!” Indeed, “Get thee behind me, S-A-T-A-N!” How unthinkable!

Hearing Peter’s entreaty to the Lord, which of us would not have said that this was the language of genuine affection, tender solicitude, and loving concern? No doubt we would have chimed in with some hearty “Amen’s”! But Jesus replies, “Get behind me — SATAN!” And our Lord was not on a name-calling spree when He uttered these words. He never uttered words in vain, without a definite meaning. Jesus did not speak merely to Satan *in* Peter. Furthermore, He did not tell Peter that his words *sounded* like the words of Satan. He simply addressed Peter AS SATAN. Peter *as* Satan — on what basis? That he was demented, insane? That he was a medium, calling up spirits out of the nether-world? No — merely that he SPOKE AS A MAN! Is this not also what James was saying when he described the *wisdom of man* in these words, “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. THIS WISDOM descendeth not from above, but is EARTHLY, SENSUAL and D-E-V-I-L-I-S-H!” (James 3:14-15). Can we not see by this that the *wisdom of man put to spiritual things* is DEVILISH!

Speaking as a man about spiritual things! Speaking with carnal wisdom about heavenly realities! On the surface there doesn’t seem to be anything wrong with what Peter said. It was a good, kindly thought. What was wrong with it was that it was the product of Self, it emanated from human sympathy and not from the heart of God. You see, my beloved, Self hates the *cross*! Satan despises the *cross*! Satan is religious, but in a perverted wisdom that refuses the will of the Father, substitutes for the reality of God, mimics the power of God, twists and distorts the truth of God, and supplants the life of God.

We blame war, drunkenness, murders, pornography, greed, crime, immorality, drugs, and a thousand other evils on Satan — yet the clear testimony of scripture is that these are all the “lusts of the flesh.” They are *flesh*! On the other hand, Satan’s activity is in a *religious realm*, in a *spiritual dimension*!

What a cunning deception has been foisted upon mankind as Satan has concealed his true identity in the dark shroud of **religion**! Jesus never once told the drunk in the gutter, the gluttonous feasters and reveling wine-bibbers with whom He ate and drank, the woman taken in adultery, the prostitutes, the greedy tax collectors, or the man full of demons, that they were of their father the devil. Not one sinner did He ever accuse of being a child of the devil! He reserved that dishonorable distinction for the **religious leaders**!

In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew we read the sternest words that ever fell from those blessed lips. He calls those to whom He speaks — the men of the most rigid religious correctness, men of the highest social respectability, of the greatest formal piety and religious pretension; not merely “church members” as we should now call them, but the officers, deacons, elders, clergymen, superintendents, priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, popes of that day, “*fools and blind,*” “*blind guides,*” “*hypocrites,*” until, in the climax of His holy indignation, He says, “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell!*” It is, then, the testimony of scripture, whether we are prepared to accept it or not, that it is the proud, religious character that is a truer expression of the Devil’s work amongst men than the openly profane and morally debased.

Oh, yes, Satan is religious! He loves to enter into the arena of men’s souls and control and manipulate men’s thinking, understanding, and activity. Truly spiritual aims are geared toward unleashing the power of the new man, the inner son, the man of the spirit. Satanic aims are geared toward development of the soul. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the earliest doctrine of Satan) is a compendium of rules, doctrines, religious exercises tailored for the soulical man and utilized by the carnal mind that wants only to be told what to think and what to do, and to do it with great external flourish and pomp. All of this becomes the core of a religious experience and practice built on fantasy, myth, folklore, tradition, program, pageantry, ceremonies, rituals, works — everything except the power and life of the spirit! This is **religion** — and religion is the **synagogue of Satan**.

Satan in tempting, baits his hook with religion. He can hang out Christ’s flag and tempt to sin under pretenses of piety. Sometimes he is the white devil of the so-called “white witches,” or the “Great White Brotherhood,” or the “Masters of the Far East,” or of the popular church systems of man as he transforms himself into an **angel of light**. Celsus wrote a book full of error, and he entitled it, *Liber Veritatus*, The Book of Truth. So Satan writes the title of religion upon his worst temptation. He comes to the firstborn Son of God with scripture in his mouth! “It is written!” he thunders. That is the same as saying, “The Bible says!” But just because the Bible says something doesn’t make it *truth* if what you are saying from the Bible is slanted, distorted, misapplied, or merely the *letter* of the word. Thus Satan wraps his poisonous pills in sugar. Who would suspect him when he comes as a divine and quotes scripture!

In the temptation of Jesus we discover this wily adversary coming upon the firstborn Son of God with Bible in hand. Just as in Eden, he is still *preaching*! He preached to the first Adam, and now he is preaching to the last Adam. And in all those thousands of years the subject hasn’t changed! Satan is still preaching SONSHIP! “It is written!” — this was the glittering weapon, the fiery dart, the master-stroke, just as when he said to Eve, “Hath God said? God doth know...” “If Thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread.” “It is written!” He thundered

as he offered the kingdoms of earth to Jesus if he would bow to the shrewd worldly wisdom of the adversary outlined in His mind by which He could have conquered even the might of the Roman empire. An easy way to popularity was pointed out — it was suggested that He cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. That would prove His sonship! No harm would come to Him for God had promised to send His angels to care for Him. A son is invincible! And the multitude, amazed, would follow Him. What gave immeasurable force to the adversary's suggestions was his appeal to the awful authority of God's word. He cast about the things he offered the glow of divine approval. He enforced his ideas with the sacred sanction of the scriptures. It was with the Bible in hand that he approached the Son of man. It cast about him such an holy air! He is no stranger to the scriptures, for he is the oldest, most accomplished *preacher*, from the dawn of history! When Satan deals with God's called out and chosen elect, obviously, he must meet such a one upon the high plane on which he lives. He could get nowhere by suggesting the gross sins of the flesh to one separated unto God. It must be through the Word! It must be through a twisted, distorted, perverted word!

It is time to stop, look, and listen. What testings and provings, what strippings and purgings, those called to sonship have been passing through! The ultimate test for God's sons will not be in the bar or in the bed. The ultimate test for God's sons will not be in the church systems of man! The Lord has wonderfully purged us from these! They hold nothing for us anymore. I can testify to you that the religious systems hold nothing for me! I am not tempted in that realm. My spirit loathes them all with intensity. But there is a realm, a realm high in the spirit, a realm reserved for the sons of God — and before any of us step out of our wilderness to appear as a manifest son of God in the earth, we will meet Satan there in that high realm of the spirit. We will encounter the dragon in the heights of God's heaven! There in your own wilderness Satan will draw you into his synagogue. He will be preaching from his pulpit in his synagogue, the synagogue of Satan. He will be preaching to YOU! The subject will be SONSHIP! "If thou be the son of God..." "Hath God said? Why, God doth know..."

Satan will bring a word to you that *sounds* so plausible, so *deep*, so *spiritual*, so *divine*, that apart from the discernment of the spirit it would seem that it just *must* be the word of the Lord! It has to be the *very highest Truth!* We hear a great deal today about many wonderful things, but I tell you, my beloved, there is but a very *fine line* between the highest truth and the darkest error — between sonship to God and our own Self-godhood — a godhood outside of true blood-bought redemption and the quickening of *our spirit* by the the *Holy Spirit*. How closely the *angel of light* resembles the "*glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!*" That is where the ultimate test lies, beloved, in the highest realm of the spirit, embedded in the sublimest of all truth and the depths of the knowledge of God. This *final* test is a dimension so awesome, so terrible, to transcendent in the counsels of God that *no one but a son indeed* can perceive the truth of the matter, and respond as Jesus did, out of the heart of the Father, "It is written!" Don't think you will escape that one, my friend. Adam didn't. Jesus didn't. And neither will we.

A lifetime of walking with God has taught me that my greatest safety is in my *relationship* with the Father, in *knowing the heart of God*. It was in knowing the Father that Jesus gained the victory over His greatest, supreme, and final test. Satan knew the scriptures, but Jesus knew the Father! To *know* Him is to be *like HIM!* The Father's name, the Father's nature is being written upon all those holy sons of God who are partaking of the mind of Christ. His word

is *spirit*, His word is *life*, and His life is the *power* to cast the dragon out of our heavens! The sons of God shall prevail!

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan...and I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, *Now* is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the *power of His Christ!*”