

THE OFFICE OF PROPHETS AND TEACHERS : PART 1

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Human Fallibility, Seriousness Of Being A Teacher, Scoffers, The Lord's Vessels, Jeremiah And Hananiah, False Prophets Of Israel, Micaiah And Four Hundred False Prophets, Modern False Prophets Psychics And Gurus, Destruction Of Jerusalem In 70 AD, Willingly Deceived, God Will Choose Our Delusions When We Rebel Against Him, The Demise Of Evil King Ahab, True Prophet Litmus Test, New Testament Warnings Regarding False Prophets, Jewish Elders Challenge Jesus, Accuser Of The Saints, Listen To God's Prophets, God's Word Endures Forever And Will Prevail, God's Prophet Is Vindicated, A God Of Truth Who Does Not Lie

If there is one thing I would like to make clear to anyone who chooses to study my writings, it is that I recognize my own fallibility. I realize that despite how convinced I may personally be regarding my beliefs, I could still be wrong about some things, or at least off the mark to some degree. This is particularly true with regards to my understanding and interpretation of Bible prophecy. At this point in time, there are simply too many unknowns which prevent all of us from being overly adamant when it comes to our views about the final events which bring the age of man to a close. It is for this reason that I include a disclaimer on the home page of the Bill's Bible Basics website.

As I explain in my 2012 article entitled "Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word", as much as we each would like to be right -- and even now may believe that we are right -- we must humbly admit to ourselves, as well as to others, that until God chooses to close the final page of His book with regards to humanity, we do not know anything with one hundred per cent certainty. Lord help me if I should ever boast that I know it all. Frankly, to make such a preposterous claim would undoubtedly be the epitome of self-righteous pride.

We all need to remember that to teach the Word of God to others is a very serious responsibility which should not to

be taken lightly by anyone. After all, as the Apostles Paul and James wrote in their Epistles:

". . . we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

1 Corinthians 8:1-2, KJV

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

James 3:1, KJV

In the above verse, the word "masters" is derived from the Koine Greek word "didaskalos". Pronounced did-as'-kal-os, it actually means a teacher of God's Word. It is for this same reason that Jesus is referred to as "master" in the Gospels. Due to some of the controversial and passionate topics which I have chosen to write about, my humility may not always be apparent in some of my articles. However, I hope that you my readers realize that to expose the lies and hypocrisy of the modern-day political, economic and religious systems of man requires a certain amount of personal conviction. However, it does not necessarily indicate that one is in denial of or has forgotten his own weaknesses and sinful condition. Let me assure you that I am most certainly fully aware of my status before the Lord. I am reminded of the following words which were spoken by King David and the Apostle James:

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

Psalms 51:2-3, KJV

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

James 1:23-24, KJV

As some of you will know yourselves, being a bearer of the Word of God is a two-edged sword. Because of that, sometimes the enemies of Christ try to soften the conviction they feel in their own hearts by using the one edge of that sword to try to invalidate what one of God's children is saying to them. The way in which they normally do this is by accusing the Lord's emissary of being proud, self-righteous, boastful,

arrogant, hypocritical, judgmental, irrational, etc. Perhaps you have experienced this yourself.

You see, these hard-hearted people feel that if they can make the messenger look bad enough, or silly enough, or perhaps uneducated and not in agreement with scientific "fact"; if they can simply ridicule him enough; it will neutralize the word of the Lord which the messenger is sharing with them. In their warped way of seeing things, they believe that if they can discredit the messenger, that automatically discredits the message as well. Not so, my friends. Tragically, foolish people such as these fail to realize that the person who is speaking to them is only serving as the Lord's vehicle. He is simply a vessel in the hands of the Potter, to be used as the Lord sees fit. Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote in several of his Epistles:

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Romans 9:20-21, KJV

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

2 Corinthians 5:20, KJV

The simple truth of the matter is that God can use whosoever He sees fit; and as I point out in "The Only Credentials You Need!", He usually chooses those people who are least likely to meet with success in the eyes of the world. Throughout the Bible we find examples of God's chosen man of the hour being harassed, questioned, and worse, by those people who refuse to heed the warnings of the Lord.

The basic attitude of these gainsayers always seems to be the same: "By what right to you say these things to us? What makes you think that God has sent you? God hasn't spoken to you!". Consider, for example, the Prophet Jeremiah, who for a period of forty years faithfully warned the stiff-necked, ancient Israelites to humbly submit themselves to the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. As you may know, on one particular occasion, Satan raised up a false prophet by the name of Hananiah, in order to contradict Jeremiah. Well, look at what happened to that foolish, deceptive man:

"Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way . . . Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."

Jeremiah 28:10-11, 15-17, KJV

Shortly after the above event, the Lord further exposed the lies of the false prophets of Israel who dared to mock the true messenger of the Lord, when He again spoke through the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah saying thusly:

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD."

Jeremiah 29:8-9, KJV

In fact, exposing the false prophets of Israel was a common theme throughout the forty years that Jeremiah preached to his people, the Jews. Consider these additional verses:

"Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed."

Jeremiah 14:14-15, KJV

"Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD."

Jeremiah 23:32, KJV

Later, when Jeremiah tried to warn the remaining Jews not to flee down into Egypt in order to escape the judgments of the Lord via the hand of the invading Babylonian forces, he was again accused of being a liar and a false prophet, as we see by the following group of verses:

"And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, even all these words, Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there:"
Jeremiah 43:1-2, KJV

As both the Bible and secular history indicate, the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar did indeed go into northern Africa in order to subdue Egypt and her allies. Another good example of God's true Prophet being maligned by the false prophets can be found in the story of King Ahab of Israel, and King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Evil King Ahab had determined to fight against Ben-hadad, the king of Syria whom he had defeated in battle on several previous occasions. Being a righteous king who feared the Lord, Jehoshaphat suggested that they inquire of the Lord first regarding the matter. Upon seeking counsel from about four hundred of Ahab's politically-correct false prophets, notice what they say to king:

"Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."
1 Kings 22:6, KJV

Not being satisfied with their response, King Jehoshaphat made further inquiry. Ahab then informed Jehoshaphat that there was another Prophet by the name of Micaiah whom he didn't particularly care for, the reason being that he never prophesied anything good for the king. Thus we read:

"And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I

hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so."

1 Kings 22:7-8, KJV

The fact that Micaiah was a true Prophet of God was not the least bit important to King Ahab. He preferred to be lied to by his politically-correct false prophets. He had absolutely no interest in the truth because his mind was already made up. Regardless of what the Lord may have thought concerning the matter, Ahab was determined to go up and fight against Ben-hadad. At first, Micaiah was somewhat hesitant to reveal the truth; and thus he lied to the two kings. However, after being prodded by King Jehoshaphat, he finally told them that Ahab would be defeated and killed. King Ahab's response to this unnerving prophecy was the following:

"And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

1 Kings 22:18, KJV

King Ahab's reaction is typical of some people today who likewise hate God's true messengers, and who accuse them of being false prophets of doom and destruction. These people also prefer to be lied to by their phony psychics and New Age false prophets and gurus, who continue to promote the lies of peace and safety and human enhancement to a "feel good" materialistic society. Because they dare to speak the truth, God's messengers of today also face persecution and ridicule, just like Jeremiah, Micaiah and many other true Prophets of old. However, notice what the Apostle Paul wrote regarding the false prophets who prefer to lull everyone to sleep with their words of comfort and well-being:

"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

1 Thessalonians 5:3, KJV

In the case of Jerusalem, and Israel in general, as some of you will already know, that is precisely what happened with the commencement of what has today become known as the First Jewish-Roman War -- a.k.a. the Great Jewish Revolt -- which began in 66 AD, and ended seven years later in 73 AD. It was in the middle of that terrible war in 70 AD that Jerusalem, including Herod's temple, were utterly destroyed by the Roman legions, under the leadership of General Titus, who was the

son of Emperor Vespasian, and a future emperor himself. You will find these historic events discussed in more detail in other of my articles.

In fact, if we make another comparison to ancient Israel before Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar, we discover that the people purposely wanted to be deceived by their political and religious leaders. They did not want to hear the truth. So, we must ask ourselves this question: Is it possible that a similar situation exists in the world today in a country which claims to be God's people? Notice the similarities between the words of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Apostle Paul:

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Jeremiah 5:31, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

2 Timothy 4:3-4, KJV

In the case of King Ahab, Micaiah then went on to reveal how the Lord had purposely sent a lying spirit to speak through the mouths of the four hundred false prophets. Why would the Lord do such a thing? Well, as the old saying goes, a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. The Lord knew that it was useless to try to change Ahab's mind. I am sure He could have if He had really wanted to, but that would have interfered with King Ahab's freedom of personal choice. Thus, just as the Lord had spoken through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah many years before, He chose Ahab's delusion for him. Consider this verse:

"I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not."

Isaiah 66:4, KJV

After being further abused for daring to speak the truth, just like the Prophet Jeremiah, Micaiah was also thrown into prison. In fulfillment of the words of the Lord's messenger,

the story ends with King Ahab being slain in battle; thus verifying the status of Micaiah as a true Prophet of God. Not only was Ahab's blood lapped up by the dogs as it was washed from his chariot, but his evil wife, Queen Jezebel, was also eaten up by dogs a short time later.

So how are we supposed to know who is a true Prophet of God, and who is a deceptive false prophet? As I have pointed out before, the criteria for determining who is a true Prophet of God can be found in the following words which were spoken by Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy, as well as by those words which were spoken by the Prophet Ezekiel some nine hundred years later. We might refer to this as God's "True Prophet Litmus Test". It is really quite simple:

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

Deuteronomy 18:21-22, KJV

"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."

Ezekiel 33:33, KJV

In short, if a certain individual prophesies something, and what he says comes to pass as he declared, then he may be a true Prophet of God. But if not, then simply ignore him. If you are familiar with the Gospel of Matthew, then you may recall that in chapter seven, Jesus likewise admonished His listeners to look at a person's fruit in order to determine whether or not they are a true Prophet of God. Consider the following group of verses:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Matthew 7:15-20, KJV

In fact, scattered throughout the New Testament, we find a number of other verses which warn God's people to beware of deceptive false prophets. Following is a small selection of said verses:

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:11, 24, KJV

"For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."

Mark 13:22, KJV

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

2 Corinthians 11:13-15, KJV

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

2 Peter 2:1, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

The Old Testament stories of Jeremiah and Micaiah are just two examples of how God's true Prophets and Messengers have always been questioned, scoffed at, and vilified by those people to whom they have been sent to warn. You might also be interested in reading the story of the Prophet Elijah and the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal, which is found just before the story of Micaiah.

Moving on to the New Testament, by the time the First Century AD had arrived, Israel's self-righteous religious leaders had become so haughty, and so lifted up in their pride, that they thought it a small thing to question and accuse the very Son of God time and time again. Consider this classic example where the Lord left them totally speechless due to His quick thinking and Wisdom of the Spirit:

"And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."
Matthew 21:23-27, KJV

As many of you will already realize, in our current time, the situation has not changed. If anything, the Devil and his human minions have become much more bold and vicious in their accusations against the true Saints and Messengers of the Most High God. After all, as we are told by both Jesus and John, that vile serpent is the Father of Lies, and the Accuser of the Saints, as we see by these two verses:

". . . He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
John 8:44, KJV

"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: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."
Revelation 12:10, KJV

The lesson here is very clear. Whether we are talking about a few thousand years ago, or today, those people who foolishly reject the human vehicles or vessels whom the Lord has chosen

to use to warn their perverse generation, need to be careful. They need to remember that they should not be looking at the messengers themselves. Rather, they should be listening to the message that the messengers bear. These enemies of Christ can howl and scream and yell all they want. They can scoff at and ridicule the messenger, and debase and humiliate him in the company of their ungodly friends. But beware; because in the end, the truth of the Word of God will indeed prevail; and God "will do all [his] pleasure, as we can determine by the following group of verses:

"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven . . . Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

Psalm 119:89, 160, KJV

"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

Psalm 138:2, KJV

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Numbers 23:19, KJV

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"

Isaiah 46:9-10, KJV

As we learned earlier, if God declares through one of His anointed Prophets that something is going to happen, then we should expect that it will indeed happen at God's specified time. The fulfillment of said prophecy will not only prove that God is a man of His word, but it will also vindicate the Prophet as well, by demonstrating that he truly heard from the Lord. As Moses wrote in the Book of Numbers, "God is not a man, that he should lie." He is a God of truth who always speaks the truth. Following are some additional verses which confirm this same point:

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

Deuteronomy 32:4, KJV

"Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me,
O LORD God of truth."

Psalms 31:5, KJV

"That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless
himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the
earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former
troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine
eyes."

Isaiah 65:16, KJV

"And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."

John 8:45, KJV

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the
life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 14:6, KJV

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as
it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy
sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Romans 3:4, KJV

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie,
promised before the world began;"

Titus 1:2, KJV

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?
He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

1 John 2:22, KJV

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in
himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar;
because he believeth not the record that God gave of his
Son."

1 John 5:10, KJV

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and
his word is not in us."

1 John 1:10, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com
<https://www.billkochman.com>
<https://www.csnet.live>

THE OFFICE OF PROPHETS AND TEACHERS : PART 2

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Moses' Example Of Godly Humility, Some More Examples: Elijah, John The Baptist, Apostle Paul, Angels, Jesus, Misguided Man Worship, Pope Worship, False Claim Of Apostolic Succession, Apostle Peter's Humility, Pagan Roots Of Roman Catholicism, Emperors Constantine And Theodosius I, Catholicism: The New State Religion, The RCC's Power Grab, RCC Is A Robber Of The Poor, RCC's Sin Of Worldliness And Materialism, Abundant Life Doctrine And Prosperity Preachers, False Shepherds Who Fleece The Flocks, The RCC And Sexual Perversion, RCC And Alcoholism

Continuing our discussion from part one, I daresay that despite the way in which certain of the true Messengers of God have been glorified and glamorized by modern organized religion, as well as by the cinematographic industry, all of the true Prophets of God since ancient times have been fully aware of their lowly condition. They were all conscious of the fact that it was only the anointing of God's Spirit upon them which made them who and what they were.

For example, while we are told that Moses originally relied upon his own strength and wisdom in his attempt to liberate the Hebrew captives from Egyptian bondage -- and fell flat on his face -- after forty years of being slowly molded in the hands of God, we are told that he eventually became the meekest man upon the face of the Earth. Consider this group of verses:

"(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)"

Numbers 12:3, KJV

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not."

Acts 7:22-25, KJV

So it seems that at first, Moses apparently thought that he could do it on his own, and he went about it the wrong way by smiting the Egyptian. He tried to do things in the flesh without God's help. However, by the time that God was done working on him, Moses had become so meek, after having been of such a high stature while living in Egypt, that when the Lord called him through the burning bush, Moses did not want the job. In fact, Moses questioned how God could possibly even use him. He tried to get out of it by arguing that the people would never believe him. He even argued that he was too slow of speech, which some people have interpreted as meaning that Moses stuttered. In short, Moses told the Lord to go and use someone else. All of this is clearly evident in the following group of verses:

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Exodus 3:11, KJV

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee."

Exodus 4:1, KJV

"And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

Exodus 4:10, KJV

"And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send."

Exodus 4:13, KJV

Despite Moses' futile pleadings, as we all know, the Lord did in fact place His anointing upon that humble shepherd;

and after performing a variety of mighty wonders -- that is, the various plagues -- He used Moses to deliver the nation of Israel out from under hundreds of years of oppressive Egyptian bondage.

In another Scriptural example, we are informed that the fiery Prophet Elijah fled from evil Queen Jezebel; despite the fact that he had just slain four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal with the sword. The words of that wicked woman seem to have frightened Elijah so that he "went for his life". In the First Book of the Kings, we find the following verses:

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there."

1 Kings 19:1-3, KJV

Then there is John the Baptist, who was the Lord's prophesied flaming evangelist of the New Testament. John too recognized that by himself, he was simply nothing. Thus, he humbly bowed himself in submission once Jesus Christ had revealed Himself to the nation of Israel. Consider some of the things that the Prophet John said concerning himself:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:"

Matthew 3:11, KJV

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

John 3:30, KJV

Looking at another example, the Apostle Paul was clearly one of the most influential and powerful leaders of the First Century Church. Yet despite the important position within the Church which he eventually came to occupy, Paul was humble enough to recognize and to admit his own human weaknesses and shortcomings. Of course, just as God had to humble and break Moses before He could begin to use him, Paul -- then known as Saul of Tarsus -- had to be broken and humbled first on that fateful day on the way to Damascus. But as a result of that

incident, Paul readily recognized that without God's Divine Anointing upon him, he was absolutely nothing. Consider some of the things that he wrote:

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."
1 Corinthians 15:9, KJV

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."
2 Corinthians 10:10, KJV

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"
Romans 7:24, KJV

Taking this line of thought a step further, we also know from the Holy Scriptures that despite their elevated position over humanity, we are told that even the Angels of God refuse to accept recognition, or to be worshipped by human beings. The following group of verses are particularly useful for sharing with people of the Roman Catholic faith who have erroneously elevated Mary, the mother of Jesus, to the supposed status of "co-redemptress" or "mediatrix", thus making her almost equal to Jesus Christ Himself. I encourage you to read the article entitled "Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism" for a deeper look at this topic:

"And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?"
Judges 13:17-18, KJV

"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."
Revelation 22:8-9, KJV

Finally, we look to our primary example of humility. That is, to Jesus Christ Himself. As the Scriptures inform us, He took upon Himself the lowly "form of a servant", and He was "obedient unto death". Despite Jesus' much elevated stature, even He humbly admitted that He was really nothing without

the Anointing and Power of His Father. I discuss this topic in much more detail in the series entitled "So You Really Think You Are So Humble?". But for now, please consider the following group of verses:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Matthew 11:29, KJV

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45, KJV

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

John 5:30, KJV

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

John 13:12-17, KJV

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Philippians 2:5-8, KJV

Sad to say, despite all of these clear examples of humility which are found throughout the pages of the Bible, there are some people today who claim to represent the Lord, and who claim to teach the true Word of God, who manifest absolutely no signs of humility whatsoever. They absolutely crave man worship, and they love getting attention. As Jesus said in the Gospels, these modern shepherds love to wear long robes, and to receive the praises of men; very much like the proud

Scribes and Pharisees of the New Testament era. Consider the following group of verse as evidence of this truth:

"Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation."

Luke 20:46-47, KJV

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

John 12:42-43, KJV

In sharing this particular point with you, I am immediately reminded of the Roman Catholic pope who is carried around on his "sedia gestatoria". That is, the portable throne which is used in certain ceremonies such as during the coronation of a new pope, during the pope's entries to St. Peter's Cathedral, and during other public functions as well. This church leader is praised and worshipped by millions of Catholics around the world! This act of wanting to see the pope when he is driven around in his pope-mobile is nothing short of man worship. It is putting faith in a man, instead of in God where it really belongs. But then, this is truly the way of our present world, as I point out in articles such as "The Only Credentials You Need!".

Knowing the evil which lurks in the heart of man, one can only wonder how the pope can possibly receive so much praise and attention, without being corrupted by it. After having his hand kissed so many times, one would think that the pope would have to either find the act totally repugnant, and be totally humbled by such admiration and praise, or else he would have to be wholly given over to his pride and vanity. Only God knows his true heart, I suppose.

Personally, despite the unfounded, erroneous claims which for many centuries have been made by the Roman Catholic hierarchy regarding so-called "apostolic succession" -- which insists that each new pontiff is fulfilling a sacred tradition which supposedly began with the Apostle Peter -- I cannot imagine for a moment that the Apostle Peter would have ever sat upon such a throne. It certainly wouldn't follow Christ's example of washing each other's feet, or any of the other examples of

humility which I cited previously. In fact, even in his own Epistles, Peter promotes the virtue of humility, as we see by the following two verses:

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"

1 Peter 5:5-6, KJV

What some of my readers might find interesting, is the fact that this custom of carrying the pope on his portable throne appears to have connections with the ancient Roman "sedia curulis", on which newly-elected consuls were carried through the streets of Rome. As I explain in other articles -- some of which are listed at the end of this series -- many Roman Catholic traditions are adopted directly from pagan practices and beliefs which were later integrated into Christianity at the time that Emperor Constantine the Great declared Rome's version of Christianity a "religio licita". That is to say, a legal religion. In fact, by the second half of the Fourth Century, Emperor Theodosius I declared Catholicism the only acceptable state religion. Furthermore, any citizen who did not embrace his bastardized religion was in fact threatened with persecution.

This bastardization of our faith was done in order to appease the masses, and to bring as many people as possible under the umbrella of the so-called "holy mother church". In short, it was a power grab. Thus, contrary to what was actually taught by Jesus in the Gospels, the Roman Catholic Church has always been more interested in power and numbers, than in preaching the pure, undefiled Gospel of Salvation. Even today the "holy mother church" allows the "natives" to continue with some of their local practices, as long as she can control their minds and hearts.

Returning to the previous Scriptures, please notice how in the verses I shared with you earlier from the Gospel of Luke, Jesus also said "which devour widows' houses". If there's one thing which greatly disturbs me, it is the fact that in many of the messages which are supposedly received by so-called Catholic visionaries and charismatics, poverty is quite often stressed as being a very important virtue. As you may already know, it's an established fact that a large percentage of the Roman Catholic laity consists of many of the poorest people

in the world, who basically live a hand-to-mouth existence.

I personally witnessed this myself over four decades ago when I lived in Mexico. Despite their lowly condition, these poor people were made to feel a moral and spiritual obligation to tithe to the "holy mother church". At least that was the case back then. I am not sure what the situation is today. At any rate, over the centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has grown into one of the richest financial empires in the world! In a word, she has truly devoured widows' houses! This unhealthy desire for worldly abundance -- that is, power, popularity and plenty -- is in direct contrast to Jesus' own teachings in the Gospels where He said things such as the following:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21, KJV

". . . My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

John 18:36, KJV

The Apostle Peter, from whom the Roman Catholic hierarchy claims all popes have succeeded, also wrote the following lines which clearly expose the Roman Catholic Church's sin of a love for wealth and materialism at the expense of their poor flocks. What a stinging rebuke to this false church! Please note that in these two verses, according to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, the phrase "filthy lucre" is derived from the Koine Greek word "aischrokerdes". This word means to be "eager for base gain, greedy for money":

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

1 Peter 5:2-3, KJV

In two of his Epistles, the Apostle Paul likewise warned the leaders of the First Century Church to beware of filthy lucre when he listed the qualifications for one who was chosen as a

bishop over one of the local congregations. Paul wrote thusly:

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous . . . Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE;"

1 Timothy 3:3, 8, KJV

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, NOT GIVEN TO FILTHY LUCRE . . . Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, FOR FILTHY LUCRE'S SAKE."

Titus 1:7, 11, KJV

So how can the Roman Catholic Church possibly justify its misguided beliefs and practices in light of the Scriptures? Surely, if ever a modern religious organization perfectly fit the description of the church of Laodicea which is found in the Book of Revelation, the Roman Catholic Church is clearly it. Consider part of the message which was delivered to John by the Angelic Messenger:

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:"

Revelation 3:15-17, KJV

In his Epistle, the Apostle James also clearly pointed out that the people who are truly rich, are those who are rich in faith, and not in material abundance. Through his strong words, we see that similar to our modern day, even in the First Century Church there were misguided people who were partial to the rich, while they neglected the spiritual needs of the poor. Consider this group of powerful verses:

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that wareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor . . ."

James 2:1-6, KJV

What an accurate depiction of so many worldly churches today which are more concerned with appearances, than with helping the physically and spiritually poor of the world. Aside from the Roman Catholic Church, I am thinking of certain American churches which are rich, white, and very prejudiced in their views. Decades ago, I attended a few of these churches in the American South. Then, of course, there is also the blight of the "Prosperity Gospel" and "Abundant Life" preachers who fleece the Lord's sheep. Oh how God must weep as He gazes at what His Bride has become! But as I explain in a number of other articles, even this is not new. Consider what God had to say to the false shepherds of Israel thousands of years ago who fed themselves, but who neglected and in fact abused God's sheep:

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock."

Ezekiel 34:2-3, KJV

As I have mentioned a number of times before, in the Gospels, Jesus did not hesitate to expose the extreme greed of the Jewish religious elders of His day. Turning again to the writings of the Apostle Peter for a moment, we see that he too exposed the very same thing. Consider this group of verses where we are clearly informed that these vile people viewed their followers as nothing more than just a revenue stream. That is what the Apostle Peter means when he writes "make merchandise of you":

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Matthew 21:12-13, KJV

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

John 2:13-16, KJV

"And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Mark 11:15-17, KJV

"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words MAKE MERCHANDISE OF YOU: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

2 Peter 2:3, KJV

If all of these things weren't enough, consider the shocking news stories we often read concerning homosexuals, lesbians and pedophiles which have been knowingly permitted to perform their sinful deeds within the Catholic structure for decades, without ever receiving any kind of reprimand or demotion in their position. Thank God at least a few of these perverts are now being brought to justice. Even here where I live, in recent years, a Roman Catholic archbishop was defrocked after it was revealed that he had been sexually abusing young boys for years, as were a number of other local Roman Catholic priests.

In my view, the real tragedy is that all of these terrible acts of sexual perversion could have easily been avoided, if the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy had simply followed some of the sound advice which was given by the Apostle Paul two thousand years ago, when he wrote the following to the Church at Corinth:

"But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

1 Corinthians 7:9, KJV

Truly, due to their willful disobedience to the Scriptures in not allowing their priests and nuns to marry, the Roman Catholic Church has fulfilled one of the very things which the Apostle Paul prophesied would happen, when he wrote the following to Timothy:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; FORBIDDING TO MARRY, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

1 Timothy 4:1-3, KJV

Many too are the embarrassing stories of alcoholic priests who have gotten rather drunk while attending certain feasts or public gatherings where they are supposed to perform a certain function. If you can believe it, some Roman Catholic priests are even claimed to have performed mass while in a drunken state, totally ignoring the following sound advice which we find in the Holy Scriptures. Please note that in the first verse that is found in Luke's Gospel, according to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, the word "surfeiting" is derived from the Koine Greek word "kraipale". This word means "the giddiness and headache caused by drinking wine to excess":

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

Luke 21:34, KJV

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."

Romans 13:13, KJV

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"

1 Timothy 3:2, KJV

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker,

not given to filthy lucre;"
Titus 1:7, KJV

While it may appear to some that I have a preoccupation with exposing the hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic Church, I should point out that all of these things are not limited to that organization alone. Some Protestant and other non-Catholic denominations are guilty of the very same things. This is indeed a sad situation; for while there are some spiritual leaders within organized religion who do take their position seriously, and who do try to faithfully feed their flocks with their current knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures, these problems with materialism, hypocrisy, unbridled lifestyles, and imposing a double standard upon their flocks, have given them, and organized religion in general, a bad name. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a growing number of people who have a sincere faith in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Bible, simply don't want to have anything to do with organized religion any longer.

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com
<https://www.billkochman.com>
<https://www.csnet.live>

THE OFFICE OF PROPHETS AND TEACHERS : PART 3

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Sharp Contrast, Doctrinal Dogmatism, Facebook Disagreements, Maintain Humility In Our Personal Understanding, Flexibility and Spiritual Unity, Slow Corruption Of The Gospel, Spoon-fed Christians, The Importance Of Personal Bible Study, Ministry Of Teaching, Beware Of Deceptive False Teachers, Our Need For Spiritual Growth, Be Persuaded In Your Own Mind, Link Between Faith and The Word, Train Up A Child: Our Children's Faith, A

Faith Tried In The Fire, Know And Be Fully Convinced Of What You Believe, Roaring Lion, Closing Remarks, Suggested Reading

Continuing our discussion from part two, while I have taken a slight detour from our main topic of discussion in this series -- that is, the office of a Prophet -- I hope that if nothing else, my words have clearly demonstrated to you the sharp contrast which exists between true, humble servants and Prophets of the Lord, and the many proud, greedy, false shepherds who control and promote organized religion today. So many of them lack the humility of our ancient forefathers of the faith.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this series, another problem which currently exists within Christianity, concerns those individuals who have felt the call to be teachers of the Holy Scriptures. Contrary to the attitude of humility which I described earlier, there are certain proud, misguided people who obviously believe that their word, or their doctrine, or their interpretation, is etched in stone, as if it were the direct, infallible Word of God. These people tend to be very rigid and totally inflexible in their views. Due to their own pride, they have elevated themselves to such a position, that if anyone should dare to question their interpretation of the Scriptures, they are looked down upon and condemned.

Sadly, I have seen this arrogant, holier-than-thou attitude manifest itself a number of times on the social networks; particularly on Facebook where I am quite active. It amazes me to see how quick some Christians are to accuse their own brethren of being false brethren, false teachers, or false prophets, simply because they have a different understanding of certain verses in the Bible. Some Facebook users are very quick to unfriend or even block people who do not agree with their views. Let's face it. There will be, and are, a lot of doctrinal disagreements between Christians. However, unless someone is actively promoting an outright heresy which can clearly be disproved by the Scriptures, should we be so fast to break fellowship with them?

Personally, while I desire with all of my heart to fully understand the mysteries of the Word of God -- particularly those Scriptures which deal with Bible prophecy -- and while I do my best to study and compare Scripture with Scripture, as I stated earlier, I must humbly admit that I can make no

claim to having interpreted anything in the Bible with one hundred per cent accuracy. I feel that we all need to remain conscious of the fact that we are prone to error, simply because we are human, and not adopt a position of extreme adamancy as some people have done.

Of course, with everything I say, there is a balance. I am not suggesting that we should not stand firm concerning what we believe the Lord has truly shown us in His Word. However, we should likewise possess the humility to admit when we are wrong, as well as the flexibility to change our views when additional study of the Scriptures reveals that we may be mistaken, or at the very least, a little bit off-center in our interpretation and understanding of certain verses.

No one can deny that trying to understand eschatological events is a very complex issue. I am sure that the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, tries to help all of us to understand the same things in His Word; particularly in regards to Bible prophecy. I am reminded of something the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

Tragically, because of the fact that we did not live during the times of Christ and the Twelve Apostles, and because we have not learned from them directly, and because almost two thousand years have transpired since the original Gospel and revelations were given, there has been plenty of time for many false ideas, doctrines and practices to creep into our belief system; exactly as I have demonstrated through the example of the Roman Catholic Church. And even with that, I barely scratched the surface. Again, please refer to some of the other articles which are listed at the end of this same series.

As I explain in other articles such as "The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?", some of these false teachings crept in due to simple human error and misunderstanding, while others were intentionally and purposely meant to pervert the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, thus making it less effective. Furthermore, this corruption of the Gospel was also a result of compromise between the political and religious systems during the first

centuries of the Christian era.

It is for this reason that even the writers of the Epistles issued warnings to the Believers of their day, such as the following example which was written by the Apostle Paul. In this particular case, Paul is rebuking the Christians who dwelt in Galatia, due to the fact that they had allowed certain misguided brethren to place them under the bondage of the Mosaic Law again. In other words, they were mixing the works of the Law and Grace, which Paul strongly opposed:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:6-9, KJV

The end result of centuries of manipulation is that today, the truth has been buried under a lot of theological rubble, erroneous traditions of men, philosophical meanderings, and in some cases, outright lies. Due to these various factors, as well as to our own pride, stubbornness, and our personal resistance to change, our minds and hearts can sometimes be filled with preconceived ideas and opinions, long-held cherished doctrines, and influences from other people which prevent us from receiving a clearer understanding of what it is the Lord is trying to reveal to us in His Word.

I can speak from personal experience regarding these matters. For many years, I too embraced certain beliefs which I have since discarded. This is because, similar to many people in organized religion today, I blindly accepted what was being taught to me without question. I was a spoon-fed Christian. I had no personal foundation in God's Word; so I was easily led astray in a doctrinal sense. However, once I began to really study the Scriptures on my own, aided by God's Holy Spirit, instead of having the "truth" served to me, I began to see and understand certain things in a new light. My friends, I cannot over emphasize the importance of personal Bible study. At the same time, let me again remind you that there is a balance to this view; for as we are told in God's Word:

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."

Proverbs 11:1, KJV

When we are still young in our relationship with the Lord, or what the Scriptures refer to as being babes in Christ, it is only natural that we should need someone else who is more spiritually mature than ourselves, who can feed and instruct us in the ways of truth. The Apostle Peter in fact refers to such young Christians as "newborn babes" who must "desire the sincere milk of the word". Furthermore, the Apostle Paul also emphasizes the importance of having Spirit-led teachers in the Church of the Lord. Consider the following group of verses:

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

1 Peter 2:2, KJV

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?"

1 Corinthians 12:28-29, KJV

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

Ephesians 4:11-12, KJV

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

2 Timothy 2:2, KJV

However, as we have already discussed, we need to be very careful when it comes to choosing who we can trust to be a faithful teacher of God's Word, because there are a lot of false, misguided, deceptive teachers out there who can very easily lead us in the wrong direction. But once again, this problem is nothing new. It has been around since the Lord first established His Church. This becomes evident by verses such as the following where the First Century Apostles also warned their flocks to beware of such individuals who were either not mature enough in a spiritual sense to teach the

Word of God, or who purposely twisted and perverted its intended meaning:

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

1 Timothy 6:3-5, KJV

"From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

1 Timothy 1:6-7, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

2 Timothy 4:3-4, KJV

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Hebrews 5:11-14, KJV

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

2 Peter 2:1, KJV

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in

which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest [twist, pervert], as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

2 Peter 3:15-16, KJV

So again, we must beware of such individuals who for one reason or another may lead us astray, to the point that we become deceived ourselves. We must seek out God-fearing, Spirit-filled teachers who adhere to the Scriptures, and who truly know what they are talking about. In this day and age of widespread deception, it may not be such an easy task.

Eventually, however, there comes a time when all parents expect their children to learn how to feed themselves, how to clothe and care for themselves, and how to eventually go out on their own as young adults in order to start their own families. As the Apostle Peter wrote in the previous verse, the purpose of studying God's Word is so "that ye may grow thereby". In other words, we can't remain spiritual babies for our entire lives. In fact, this is a topic which I also discuss in the series entitled "Are You Just a Baby Huey?: How to Organize Your Own Home Fellowship".

As mature Christians, the Lord also expects us to learn how to feed ourselves, or perhaps better said, how to be fed and spiritually nourished directly by Him through our faithful study of His Word, so that we can be firmly established in the faith. In other words, when we are young in the Lord, just as occurs with physical children who accept what they are taught by their parents, many Christians also believe and accept without question what we have been taught by our priest, pastor, minister or Bible teacher.

In a sense, our faith is really their faith, because we are believing as they believe, and understanding the Scriptures as they understand them. While this may be good and well for a time, what the Lord really desires of us is that we are fully persuaded of our beliefs for ourselves. We must act and work according to our own faith based upon our personal knowledge of God's Word. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote the following when a problem arose in the Church concerning the eating of meat and the observance of Jewish holy days:

". . . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5, KJV

"Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he

that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Romans 14:22, KJV

So as you can see, our faith must not simply be based upon what we have heard from others. Rather, it must be based on a certain knowing; and the only way that knowing comes is through a personal, diligent study of the Word of God. This is how we each become fully persuaded of the Truth; for real faith comes only through hearing -- or reading and studying -- the Word of God. In contrast, if our faith is only built on what we have heard from others, then we may falter when storms strike our lives. We may sink, just as the Apostle Peter began to sink under the waves of the Sea of Galilee. Following are a few more verses which help to clarify these thoughts:

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Romans 10:17, KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Acts 17:10-11, KJV

For those of you who have young children, this concept is particularly important. As Christian parents, we desire with all of our hearts that our children will grow up possessing a fear of the Lord, and a love for His Word. Thus, in the few short years that they are with us, we try our best to fill their minds and hearts with the knowledge of the Lord.

However, despite our best efforts, we must all realize that the day will eventually arrive when our children will reach the age of accountability. At that time, they are going to have to decide on their own what they choose to believe. In that day, their faith is going to have to be based on their own belief in, and acceptance of, the Word of God, because

we will no longer be standing next to them saying "This is the Truth. This is what you must believe because I believe it."

They are going to have to be fully persuaded of these things for themselves of their own free will, and not just because mom and dad say so. Now, if we have been faithful shepherds during their formative years, hopefully, our children will make the right choice despite any opposition they may get from antagonistic school friends, atheistic teachers, or anyone else who may come along in their lives and question their beliefs. Hopefully, as it is written in the Book of Proverbs, they will not depart from the Way they have been taught, as we see here:

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6, KJV

Hopefully, our children will be so filled with the Word and the Spirit of the Lord, that they will easily and readily be able to humbly yet convincingly provide the proper answers concerning their faith straight from the Bible. As Peter wrote in his first Epistle:

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"

1 Peter 3:15, KJV

As I have now made rather clear, the key is faith based upon a diligent, personal study of, and an understanding of, God's Word. This is truly the only way that any of us can be fully persuaded of what we believe. This is the only kind of faith which will endure the storm and pass the hardest test. It is the faith of gold tried in the fire as we see mentioned by the Apostle Peter in this verse:

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

1 Peter 1:7, KJV

With this last thought, we have now come full circle in this discussion. For you see, in order for one to be a faithful and effective prophet, teacher or evangelist for the Lord,

he must be firmly convinced of what he believes, and in Whom he has believed. It is this kind of strong conviction which the Apostle Paul wrote about in his second Epistle to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, as we see here:

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2 Timothy 1:12, KJV

This is exactly why the Prophets and holy men of ages past were able to endure the things which they did; for they knew in Whom they believed. There must be no room for doubt or vacillation in our minds and hearts whatsoever; for if there is doubt, the enemies of Christ will surely find it out and make use of it. We must know what we believe, and why we believe it. Otherwise, we may be devoured by the roaring lion, as we see in these two verses:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

1 Peter 5:8, KJV

"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

2 Timothy 4:17, KJV

So if you wish to remain safe from the jaws of the lion, and his demon-inspired emissaries in this perverse generation, you must faithfully read, study, believe in and memorize the Word of God! In this way, and in this way only, you will be founded upon the Rock, and you will not be ashamed in the evil day. You will keep the Heavenly Vision right up to the very end, despite anything they may try to do to stop you. Following are some additional verses to inspire your heart:

"He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock."

Luke 6:48, KJV

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was

Christ."

1 Corinthians 10:4, KJV

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Ephesians 6:13, KJV

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38, KJV

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Hebrews 11:16, KJV

In conclusion, if I were to summarize the main points of this series, I suppose that it would be the following:

1. If God has called you to be a prophet within His Church, make absolutely certain that you are truly hearing from Him, and not just from your own mind, before you speak a single word. Otherwise, keep your mouth shut!

2. If God has called you to be a teacher, make certain that whatever you teach is fully supported and confirmed by His recorded Word, meaning the Bible.

3. If God has called you to be an evangelist, make certain that you are preaching the straight, unadulterated truth of His Word without compromise or political correctness.

4. Whatever position God gives you within His Church, make sure that you carry it out in a spirit of humility, giving Him the glory at all times. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31, KJV

5. Watch out for false teachers and false prophets. Confirm all things with God's Word before you accept them as being the truth.

With these words I will bring this series to a close. I pray that it has been a blessing and an inspiration to many. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thank you so very much! May God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this series, or which contain topics which are related to this series. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics website:

Abundant Life Doctrine: Scripturally Exposed!
Apostasy of Oprah Winfrey: America's False Prophetess?
Are You Just a Baby Huey?: How to Organize Your Own Home Fellowship
Don't Ever Underestimate Our Spiritual Enemy
Elijah: Where Are the True Prophets of God?
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word
Lies and Deceptions of the Roman Catholic Church
Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism
Modern False Prophets and Worldly Ecumenism
Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon
Nostradamus: Prophet of God, or Messenger of Satan?
Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Should Christians Engage in Doctrinal Debates?
So You Really Think You Are So Humble?
Sorry . . . Jesus Is Not Coming At Any Moment
Speak the Pure Language of Truth
The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?
The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping
The Only Credentials You Need!

Written by Bill Kochman

wordweaver777@gmail.com

<https://www.billkochman.com>

<https://www.csnet.live>