

## SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD : PART ONE

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After studying the Holy Scriptures for several decades, I have come to realize that there is a significant difference between the world's standard, and God's standard. In fact, I would daresay that they are in complete opposition and total contradiction to each other. While the rulers of this world teach us that we should seek a good education and work hard, in order that we might eventually become successful, rich and comfortable in this life, God's Holy Word teaches us to set our goals on something much higher; on something Eternal in the Heavens; and not on something which is temporary and of this Earth. Jesus and the Apostle Paul clearly expressed this thought when they said such things 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 . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:19-21, 24 KJV

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

John 6:27, KJV

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

2 Corinthians 4:18, KJV

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Colossians 3:1-2, KJV

Beginning with the Patriarch Abraham, the forefathers of our faith certainly had the Heavenly Vision; and because they had it, they were willing to forsake their Earthly comfort, their wealth, their worldly education, their prestige, and even their homelands, in order to obey the Lord. They were willing to forsake all that is held dear according to the standard of the world, in order to seek a Higher Calling. In Hebrews chapter eleven, the famous roll call of the heroes of faith, we find such examples as the following:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."  
Hebrews 11:8-10, KJV

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 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 11:13-16, KJV

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."  
Hebrews 11:24-27, KJV

As noted in the previous verses, if we are truly God-fearing Christians, then we need to recognize that we are pilgrims and strangers on this Earth; and that we are on our way to a much better country, that is, a Heavenly Country. As such, we must guard ourselves against embracing the same standards as the blind, materialistic, anti-God children of the world; many of whom have little, or no hope, for a much better life in the Heavenly Kingdom to come, ruled by God Himself. Such people have already chosen their god, and he is the exact same one who tempted Jesus Christ with the temporary things of this world during His forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness of Jordan, as we see by these verses:

"And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it."  
Luke 4:5-6, KJV

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

Being the children of the King that we are, our Heavenly Father calls us to live a simple life, and to be content with having our basic needs met, and to not long for more. Paul candidly informs us that we came into this world with nothing, and we shall surely leave it in the same manner; and the Apostle John warns us to beware of the enticing offerings of the world, because they are clearly not of our Heavenly Father, but are of the world and its false god:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11, KJV

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

1 Timothy 6:6-8, KJV

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5, KJV

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

1 John 2:15-16, KJV

As Paul also writes in his first Epistle to the brethren at Corinth, we are all tempted by the lusts of the flesh and the enticing offerings of the god of this world, but that does not mean that we have to yield ourselves to them. God will strengthen us against such temptations; He will make a way to escape; if we ask for His help. Furthermore, in his Epistle, James tells us to follow Jesus' example by resisting the devil, and he will flee from us:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

1 Corinthians 10:13, KJV

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

James 4:7, KJV

In the twelve chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after briefly describing the sufferings of Christ, we are also told that the sinful temptations and afflictions we endure as Christians, are nothing compared to those suffered by Christ, who went all the way to the Cross in order to defeat sin and death once and for all. The author plainly states

that we "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin". While it had never occurred to me before, perhaps when the author wrote that line, he may have been thinking of the Lord's final prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, when at the height of His temptation, just prior to His betrayal, when Satan was obviously trying his hardest to weaken Jesus, in order to cause Him to abandon His Earthly Mission, the Lord's sweat fell to the ground as great drops of blood:

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."  
Hebrews 12:4, KJV

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."  
Luke 22:44, KJV

In his second Epistle to the Corinthian Church, right before he admonishes us to set our vision on the Eternal Realities of the Spirit, and not on the temporal things of this world, the Apostle Paul also informs us that our temptations and afflictions in this current life are light and temporary; and that they are nothing compared to the glorious future which lies ahead for those who remain faithful to the end. He makes a similar remark in his first letter to the Corinthians as well:

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"  
2 Corinthians 4:17, KJV

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."  
1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV

It is only in the madness and foolishness of this current world, that short-sighted men seek for temporal power and wealth, because as I mentioned a moment ago, that is all some of them have to look forward to. They have no hope for Heaven; some of them don't even believe in it; so they set about to build their little worldly kingdoms. As history clearly attests, it is when people become greedy, selfish, power-hungry, and long for more than their allotted share, that violence and war often erupt; either on a national level, or on an international level. It is the same sad story of the rich ruling class versus the oppressed poor class; the "haves" versus the "have-nots"; and as Jesus Himself said on one occasion, it is a never-ending battle. Undoubtedly, this is because the evil heart of man refuses to change. Consider these verses:

"For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."  
Matthew 26:11, KJV

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"  
Jeremiah 17:9, KJV

On a more personal level, yielding to such worldly desires

can easily become a satanic trap which will subtly draw us away from our close relationship with the Lord. In one of his letters to Timothy, Paul tells us that riches and the love of money can cause us to err from the faith. In other words, too much material abundance, or an unhealthy desire to acquire the same, can easily cause us to turn our backs on the Lord, and to eventually forget about Him. In our pursuit of such worldly things, we can lose focus of our real purpose in this life; and if we are not careful, we may even end up trading in our Heavenly rewards for a cheap, Earthly counterfeit. Paul warns us:

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."  
1 Timothy 6:9-10, KJV

While rich people may give the appearance of being happy on the outside, many of them are in fact miserable, shallow, unsatisfied individuals on the inside. Furthermore, as Paul writes, some of them have indeed "pierced themselves through with many sorrows", because not only are they empty shells in a spiritual sense, but they must constantly worry about other greedy souls trying to steal their accumulated wealth through a variety of often dishonest and unscrupulous means. It is when one is at the top of the ladder, that others try their best to pull him down.

To add to the plague of riches, it seems that when certain people accumulate a degree of physical wealth, they become self-righteous and self-confident like Cain; and begin to think that everything they have is by their own hard work and the sweat of their brow. Some of them adopt the proud, boastful attitude of the secular humanist, who basically declares himself his own god, and the master of his own fate. They begin to forget their weak, mortal nature, and think that they are invincible; and quite often, as in the story that Jesus told, their wealth causes them to become even more greedy and selfish, while they totally neglect the needs of their spirit:

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."  
Luke 12:16-21, KJV

In the Gospel of Mark, the Lord made a similar statement regarding those foolish persons who spend a lifetime accumulating great wealth, while denying the real needs of their spirit. He said:

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 8:36-37, KJV

Such people may have fat bodies, but they possess very lean souls. The one true God, and the blessings which He bestows upon us, are far removed from the minds of such vain people. The Apostle Paul tells us that through their life of sin and physical pleasures, these people become spiritually blind, and alienated from the Lord. He is simply no longer even in their thoughts. In fact, Paul tells us that the truths of the Spirit seem like foolishness to such worldly people. They cannot even begin to understand them:

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"

Ephesians 4:17-18, KJV

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

It seems that the only time such people call upon the Lord, is in their time of need when their problems have become unbearable; such as when they are sick, or when they are facing financial difficulties, or perhaps when they are dying. This kind of religion is hypocritical Christianity; it is not true Christianity. It is merely a religion of convenience, and not the true worship which our Heavenly Father desires of us. Two thousand years ago, the Lord accused the ancient Jews of the very same thing when He said:

". . . Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

Mark 7:6b, KJV

It is for these reasons, that Jesus expressed how difficult it is for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God, because they simply are not willing to pay the price of forsaking all. The Apostle James goes even a step further and warns us of the fate of those who prefer to hold on to their worldly wealth, and trust in it, instead of in the Name of the Lord:

". . . Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Matthew 19:23-24, KJV

". . . Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:24b, KJV

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let

him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

Luke 9:23-24, KJV

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Matthew 19:29, KJV

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14:33, KJV

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

James 5:1-7, KJV

Sadly, as I point out in such articles as "Money-Making Bible Hucksters and Mammon", modern Christianity has not remained immune to these worldly temptations. The so-called Christianity which is practiced by some churches and modern preachers and tele-evangelists, is really no better than the rampant commercialism which plagued Judaism two thousand years ago, as was exemplified by Jesus entering the Temple in Jerusalem with a whip, and overturning the tables of the moneychangers:

"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

In fact, I would daresay that modern Christianity may be even worse than ancient Judaism in this regard; because the knowledge of the true ways of the Lord has been on the Earth for some two thousand years now; and we are supposed to have learned something from the poor example of the Jewish Elders of ages past. Instead, in some cases, such as with the Roman Catholic Church, and the so-called "abundant life" which is espoused by quite a few American southern preachers, modern Christianity is fueled by the very same desire for personal gain -- or "filthy lucre" as the Apostles called it -- at the expense of preaching the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter and Paul apparently saw the worldly spirit of commercialism which was beginning to creep into the young new Church; and it was for this reason that they both issued some sound advice for those who had been entrusted with caring for and feeding the Lord's flocks; such as the following:

"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

"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;"

1 Peter 5:2, KJV

Repeatedly, these two leaders of the Early Church warned the Elders to beware of sharing the Word of God for profit; that is, for personal material gain. If you will excuse my bit of humour, we could say that the shepherds were supposed to be "profitless prophets". As I state in the aforementioned article, when Jesus sent out His first Disciples, He clearly told them that they were to freely share the Gospel. On yet another occasion, He said that even after we have done the Will of God by faithfully preaching the Gospel, we are still to consider ourselves to be unprofitable servants, who have merely done that which is our duty to do as the Lord's ambassadors on the Earth. We are to seek no glory of our own, and certainly no worldly profit. We will receive our Heavenly Rewards in due time, if we remain faithful:

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead,



cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."

Matthew 10:7-10, KJV

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Luke 17:10, KJV

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

2 Timothy 4:5-8, KJV

Sadly, today the situation has been completely reversed in some instances. Rather than boldly, and freely, speak the full truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, come what may, some commercialized churches and fast-talking preachers deliver a watered-down, compromised message which doesn't offend anyone, and which also permits them to keep their tax-exempt status with the IRS. The IRS -- Internal Revenue Service -- is a tax collection agency of the USA. For the right price, a church can bring in a famous preacher who will deliver a message which is specifically tailored to what the church wants their members to hear, regardless of how well-founded that message may be upon Biblical truth. How ironic, that almost two thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul foresaw these false preachers and teachers who would one day enter the flocks of God:

"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

It is right after this, that Paul says to do the work of an evangelist, as I quoted a moment ago. It is interesting to note that in verse five he begins by saying "But watch thou in all things". In other words, Paul seems to be saying "Watch out! Be careful! Keep on the lookout for these false teachers who will deceive your flocks and draw them away from the truth". If we take into consideration the other verses which follow verse five above, he may also be saying that if you are a preacher of the Gospel, then you had better make sure that you are really preaching the right Gospel, and that you finish your course as he has done, if you expect to receive a Heavenly Reward.

In addition to their serious compromise of the truth, or their corruption of the same, these fast-talking profiteers sell books, magazines, CD's, DVD's, videos, cassette tapes, and everything else imaginable under the sun in order to

fill their coffers. They are in churches; in evangelical meetings; they go door-to-door; they are on the radio and on the television set; and they have web sites all across the Internet where they let you read one chapter, and tell you to send them some money if you want to read the rest. It is really pathetic! All of this commercialism really makes me sick; and I would daresay that God feels exactly the same! These things ought not to be; and some day, God will hold every single one of these people accountable for their actions unless they repent of their sins! I am reminded of the sober warning which the Lord issued to the wayward Church of Laodicea, as recorded in the Book of Revelation. That rebuke states in part:

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 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: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."  
Revelation 3:14-19, KJV

As we continue this discussion in part two, we will take a look at other gimmicks used by modern churches. In addition to this, we will examine the problem of all noise but no real substance, plus talk about spiritually dead churches, appearing to be right on the outside while being wrong on the inside, America's spiritual condition, being ostracized for preaching God's truth, America's coming judgment, being separated from the world, God's faithful provision of our needs, the principles of answered prayer, the murmuring Israelites, seeking first the Kingdom, and the narrow path of Discipleship. I trust that you will join me.

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD : PART TWO

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Other Gimmicks Of Modern Churches, All Noise But No Real Substance, Spiritually-Dead Churches, Right On The Outside

But Wrong On The Inside, America's Spiritual Condition, Ostracized For Preaching God's Truth, America's Coming Judgment, Separated From The World, God Will Provide Our Needs, Principles Of Answered Prayer, Murmuring Israelites Seek First The Kingdom, Narrow Path, Do You Have An Ear?

In addition to hiring famous preachers to awe their members, some churches resort to other gimmicks in order to retain their membership, such as having cheerleaders, rock bands, special outings, bake sales, bingo games, music concerts, video presentations, etc.; not to mention all of the weird manifestations which have been occurring in recent years. It has become like a wild spiritual circus in some churches. In spite of all of these things, from everything I have read in recent years, it seems that people still continue to leave the churches in very large numbers. Not only that, but what I personally find alarming is the fact that in the so-called "Christian" United States of America, they are turning to Islam, to Wicca, to New Age thought, and to an assortment of other pagan belief systems in increasing numbers. Now, if Christianity has so much to offer, why is this happening?

While it would be easy to attribute this decline in church attendance to the prophesied apostasy, or falling away, of the Endtime, I believe that it can also be attributed to another factor; and that is this: A lot of people are still spiritually hungry, but their spiritual needs are simply not being met in the churches, so they are going elsewhere; but sadly, they are turning to the wrong things. There is a lot of noise, a lot of show, and a lot of glitz in the churches, but very little true spiritual substance. As I point out in several other articles, such as in "Where Are the First Century Churches?" and "Churchianity or Christianity: Which Do You Practice?", some churches have divorced themselves from the truth of God's Word; and thus, just like the church of Laodicea, while they appear to be alive and well on the surface, they are in fact spiritually dead.

Jesus described the religious system of the Scribes and the Pharisees in the very same way. Long before He had ever been born, they had already become spiritually dead, due to their lust for worldly power and wealth, and their desire to do things their own way, instead of God's way:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."  
Matthew 23:27, KJV

Some churches today have likewise foolishly surrendered the true spiritual riches, in order to adopt the false standards of the world; primary of which are power, popularity and wealth. They are just like the rich man who wanted to build bigger barns, while within he was spiritually empty. Just as Jesus said back then, they are spiritually dead; they are the blind leading the blind. Furthermore, just as the Jewish leaders of old killed their true Prophets in order to try to silence the Voice of the Lord, today, certain sectors of organized religion react in a similar manner by ridiculing

and discrediting anyone who tries to expose their sins as well.

Please ponder the following thought for a moment. At the beginning of the First Century, the Sanhedrin -- that is, the Jewish council of Seventy Elders plus the High Priest -- was the authoritative religious voice of the day. As I mentioned a moment ago, on the outside, everything seemed right. While it is true that Palestine was under Roman oppression, the Jewish religious system was still intact, and permitted to be practiced; and the common Israelite accepted the word of the Elders as coming from God Himself. Yet, in spite of this seemingly "right" outward appearance, God chose to send John the Baptist with a strong message of repentance, in order to prepare the hearts of the people for the Lord's arrival. So while the crafty Jewish Elders were saying that everything was fine, God's true Prophet, and later even Jesus Himself, were saying "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!". Why repent if nothing was wrong?

Today in so-called "Christian" America, a similar situation exists. Once again, everything seems right on the surface. We have churches, denominations, preachers, revivals, Bible versions, and Christian radio and TV programs galore; and every weekend, millions of people across America faithfully attend Saturday or Sunday church services; yet as back then, something is terribly wrong. Most churches certainly won't admit that anything is wrong. Your average preacher is too busy talking about God's "wonderful financial blessings", or about an upcoming building project, or about the so-called "Second Pentecost" and the coming revival in which God is going to do "wonderful things". Anyone who does not follow this party line, or who dares to question the voice of these false prophets, is immediately silenced and ostracized. In worse-case scenarios, he may even be branded as a dangerous cult leader, or as a brainwashed cult follower, or as one who is mentally and emotionally deranged.

"Oh no!", they say. "You are wrong! America is beautiful! America is wonderful! America is the most God-fearing nation upon this Earth! We are His children! He won't allow any of those things to happen to us! Go away, you false prophet! God bless America!" Well, the Jews made the Old Testament Prophets "go away"; and they made John the Baptist "go away"; and they even made Jesus "go away"; but eventually, God made them "go away" in 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was invaded, and their sacred Temple utterly destroyed by the Romans! In similar manner, these false prophets of modern churchianity are so wrapped up in their patriotism, and in their materialism, that they don't have a clue as to what is about to happen. They can't even see that God's mighty Hand of Judgment is about to fall; and it will indeed fall one of these days soon unless there is a great deal of repentance! If God loves America, and I believe that He does, then He must punish her for her many iniquities which have reached unto Heaven! As we read in the Book of Proverbs:

"Open rebuke is better than secret love."  
Proverbs 27:5, KJV

So the warning is clear. As servants of the Lord, we must each remember that we are called to center our lives around

the True Standard of God's Word, and NOT around the false standards of the world. We must make certain that we are seeking first His Kingdom, and not the false, materialistic kingdom of Satan and of the world, which will never truly satisfy, and which only offers death, and not life. We must always remember that while we are currently in the world, we are not a part of it; and that we should only interface with it, as much as may be necessary, in order to accomplish the task which the Lord has given each of us to do. Please consider the following verses:

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."  
John 15:19, KJV

"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."  
1 Corinthians 7:31, KJV

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,"  
2 Corinthians 6:17, KJV

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;  
Philippians 2:15, KJV

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."  
2 Timothy 2:4, KJV

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."  
James 4:4, KJV

From personal experience, I can tell you that if you have been called to serve the Lord in some capacity, and if you are truly seeking first His Kingdom by denying yourself, in order to unselfishly meet the spiritual needs of others, He will provide for you in some way; He will take care of you. I cannot say exactly how He will do it, but He will do it, because He has promised to; and it will amaze you when you begin to see the Lord's Hand begin to work. As I mention in the series "The Fruit of the Womb", as children of the King, we are each a part of God's holy Household; we are His sons and daughters. Surely, the Creator of the universe is more than able, and willing, to provide our needs when we are pleasing in His sight.

The Lord is not one to say, "This is the way; walk ye in it", and then not provide for His children along that way. Didn't He drop Manna from the sky, and send flocks of quail, and make water spring forth from a dry rock for the children of Israel? It is sometimes through His provision, that we know that we are in His Will. Of course, it is possible that the Lord may test our faith first, in order to see if we are

still willing to believe and obey, even when things seem contrary to what we expect; however, if there is one thing of which I am certain, it is that we are not to worry about the future, because He will provide if we are pleasing Him. Please consider these wonderful promises found in both the Old and New Testaments:

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"  
Isaiah 59:1, KJV

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart . . . I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."  
Psalms 37:4, 25, KJV

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."  
Malachi 3:10, KJV

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."  
Matthew 6:33-34, KJV

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened . . . If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"  
Matthew 7:7-8, 11, KJV

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."  
Matthew 21:22, KJV

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."  
Luke 12:6-7, KJV

"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God

so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."  
Luke 12:22-31, KJV

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"  
Romans 8:32, KJV

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."  
Philippians 4:19, KJV

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."  
1 John 5:14-15, KJV

Before concluding this article, allow me clarify that our Heavenly Father promises to provide all of our needs; but this does not necessarily mean that He will provide everything that we ask for. Some people pray, and then become disappointed when their request doesn't materialize. They erroneously think that God has either not heard them, or else that He has failed to answer them, or that He may even be mad at them, when this may not be the case whatsoever. Perhaps He really did answer, but not in the way in which they expected. The Lord usually replies with "Yes", "No" or "Wait". Notice that in the last verses above, John very specifically writes "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us".

In other words, what we need, and what we want, may not be the same thing. God will surely provide what we really need, but He may not provide what we simply want, because it may not be according to His Will. Perhaps it is something which may end up being harmful to us, either in a physical or a spiritual sense, so the Lord refuses to allow us to have it; or maybe it is something that we are simply lusting after. As James also wrote:

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."  
James 4:3, KJV

As I explain in other articles, a primary example of this, is the Israelites whom the Lord freed from Egyptian slavery. Following the initial excitement of their liberation, they became one rebellious, moaning, groaning, complaining group of people. They complained about their loss of comforts in the land of Goshen. They complained about how hot it was. They complained that they didn't have a lot of food to eat. They complained that water was scarce. They complained that Moses wasn't a very good leader; and on and on they went. Consider the following verses:

"And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger . . . And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD."  
Exodus 16:3, 8, KJV

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"  
Exodus 17:1-3, KJV

The Lord finally got tired of their constant complaining, and decided that it was time to teach them a lesson. While we are told that He provided Manna for them for forty years, and quail in abundance, and water from the rock, we are also told in Psalm 106 that He sent leanness to their souls. This Psalm is an excellent summary of what the Lord had to deal with regarding those stubborn Jews. As I explain in such articles as "The Fruits of Disobedience", He was forced to punish them over and over again due to their lack of faith, their constant complaints, their stubbornness, and their backslidden condition. Part of their initial punishment was that they were forced to spend forty years wandering in the wilderness until the older complaining generation had died off; and in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us that we are supposed to learn from their poor example, lest in our pride we think that we are any better than them:

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of



the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

1 Corinthians 10:1-12, KJV

So as I explained in part one, we must learn to be thankful and content with whatever God chooses to give us; even if His answer is "No" sometimes. We must simply trust that He knows what is truly best for us; and what is usually best for us, is giving us just what we need, and no more than that. As I noted earlier, when we have too much, it serves as a distraction in our lives. We become too comfortable, too self-confident, we take too much for granted, and we begin to lose our fear of the Lord. We don't appreciate the things He has done for us and given us, and we soon drift away from Him.

So what about you? Are you truly seeking first the Kingdom of God in your life, or are you following the deceptive ways of the world? As Jesus said, we cannot do both; we cannot serve two masters; we cannot serve God and mammon; that is to say, material gain. It must be one or the other; our heart must not be divided; our eye must be single. As King Solomon wrote twice in the Book of Proverbs:

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Proverbs 14:12, KJV

Jesus made similar statements in the New Testament when He cautioned us with the following:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Matthew 7:13-14, KJV

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"

John 10:27, KJV

Are you one who is listening to and following the voice of the Great Shepherd? Are you following His path to Eternal Life? I certainly hope so. I pray that this article has been a blessing in your life.

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