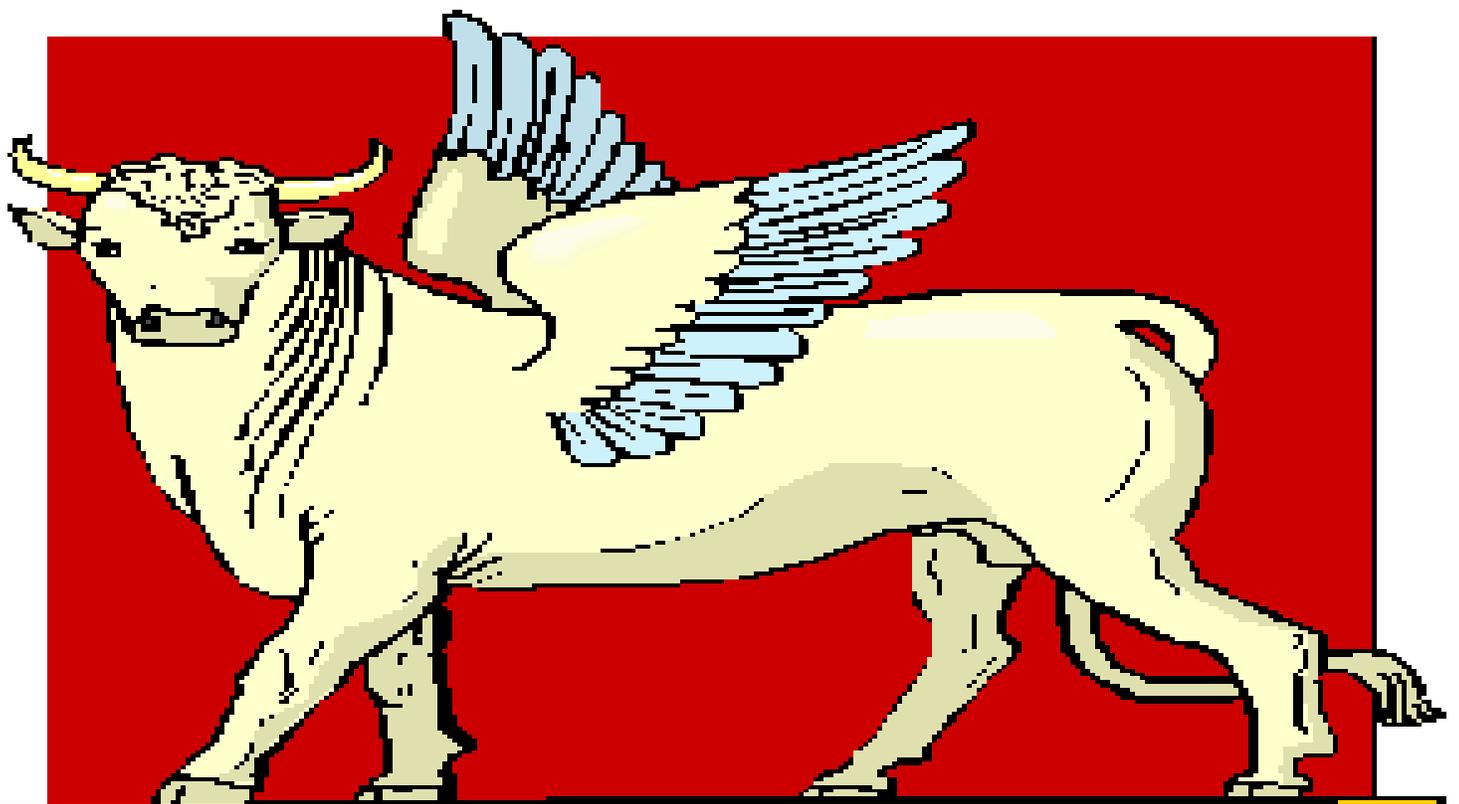


**Jerusalem  
or  
Bethel?**



“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

“Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom. And with all your getting, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7).

This booklet has been written for the purpose of bringing understanding to Christians, who have not found some practices in churches according to Scripture. Nor have they seen the churches being built according to the mind of the Spirit of God. It is also for those who see their hunger for Christ Jesus being obstructed, in ways that stifle the work of the Holy Spirit within an assembly and within themselves as they attempt to walk after the Lord Jesus. Other believers may see problems in an assembly, but do not think they are able to understand the root of the problem or are qualified to approach it. So there is a tendency to ignore what they do not think they can fix. The foundational teaching of the Scriptures is where the answer is to be found.

This booklet will bring forth some of the differences between the truth as found in Scripture and practices in present day churches. It is not written for the purpose of bringing about another sect in the camp of Christendom, but to make known the key that opens the treasury of Christ.

The Scriptures show that the inheritance of riches for the Christian are found in Christ Jesus alone, without the religious intrusions of man.

This booklet records the history of Israel's division into two kingdoms. This division created a second nation, Samaria. Jerusalem had been chosen of God as the center of Israel. God had set up Jerusalem as the only legitimate place of worship; He would accept no other location for His people Israel. "...He (Rehoboam) reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there" (I Kings 14:21). In Samaria, Bethel became the new place of worship.

On the day of Pentecost, God established the Church as the divine dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The Church is a type of Jerusalem, and is of divine origin; both Jerusalem and the Church were established of God for worship, both were created to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Man making Bethel, a place of worship in Samaria, is the result of the religious flesh in man attempting to approach God. Bethel's religious establishment, started by man, is a type of what the present day churches have accepted through tradition and incorporated as worship. This worship, brought into the churches apart from the Spirit of

God, like Bethel is not of divine origin, but after man's own religious design.

# **Jerusalem or Bethel?**

## **Chapter I**

In the days after the death of King Solomon (975 B.C.), there came a series of events that divided the nation of Israel. These events changed the purpose and course that God had set for Israel as a people and as a nation for the remainder of their history. God had chosen Israel out of all nations of the earth to reveal Himself, His character, and His purposes (Deuteronomy 14:2). God had planned for Israel to be the head nation among all the nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 28:1). Instead, Israel followed after the religion of expedience and sank to a new low point in their existence.

After King David died, Solomon became king. God continued His purpose of revealing His intent for His people Israel to King Solomon. On two separate occasions God spoke to Solomon. Solomon had started out well in his early years, having a heart for God and His people (I Kings 3:7-9, 11:9). However, Solomon's heart followed after his wives, and wandered away from God, distorting God's purpose for Solomon in leading His people Israel (I Kings 11:33). Solomon made high places of worship for his foreign wives, and corrupted Israel's true worship in Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:1-13).

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam took Solomon's place in ruling over the people of Israel. However, Rehoboam did not use wisdom in leading the nation. He failed to heed the counsel of the older men in his court. Rehoboam put heavier loads on the people than did his father Solomon. Because of the actions of Rehoboam, the people groaned under their load, and finally rebelled against his rule. As a result, the kingdom of Israel became divided, just as God had prophesied through the prophet Ahijah (I Kings 11:30-31). God chose an Ephraimite named Jeroboam to chastise His people Israel for corrupting worship at Jerusalem, thus fulfilling the word spoken through the prophet Ahijah.

When Jeroboam addressed the twelve tribes of Israel he stole the hearts of the people away from King Rehoboam to himself (I Kings 12:20). The result of these persuasions by Jeroboam was that ten of the twelve tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam thus shifting their allegiance away from Rehoboam, the rightful king of Israel.

Jeroboam set up his ruler-ship in northern Israel, in the area that became known as Samaria. As Jeroboam consolidated his power he began to say in his heart; "If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah" (1 Kings

12:27). He feared that if the ten tribes returned to sacrifice in the house of the Lord, they would again give their loyalty to Rehoboam, thus again reuniting the nation under one king. So, Jeroboam took six actions to stop the people from returning to Jerusalem.

The actions are as follows:

**1. Change of the Object of Worship:** Jeroboam substituted idolatry for true worship, which made it more convenient for the people than going back to Jerusalem. He made golden calves as a symbol and substitute of worship (I Kings 12:28). A golden calf was what the Israelites built and worshipped when Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Law of God (Exodus 32:1-6). God's anger was to the point of destroying Israel for this practice of idolatry (Exodus 32:9-10).

**2. Change of the Place of Worship:** Jeroboam changed the place of worship from Jerusalem to Bethel and Dan.. God had said, "...before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there" (I Kings 11:36; 2 Kings 21:4; 2 Chronicles 6:6). Jeroboam built high places of worship at Bethel and Dan.

**3. Change of Priesthood:** Jeroboam started his own priesthood apart from the tribe of Levi (1 Kings 12:31). This completely put away the order God had established with the tribe of Levi. God commanded in the Law of

Moses that priests could only come out of the tribe of Levi. Jeroboam even went so far as to stop those Levites chosen of God from practicing their priestly service (2 Chronicles 11:14; I Kings 12:31).

**4. Change of Altar:** Jeroboam built an altar in these high places at Bethel and Dan in an attempt to simulate the altar in Jerusalem (I Kings 12:33). This altar would satisfy the Israelites and keep them from going to the true altar in Jerusalem.

**5. Change of Feast Day:** Jeroboam proclaimed a feast day. Jeroboam wanted this day to emulate the feast that God had given to be kept in Jerusalem (I Kings 12:32).

**6. Change of Incense:** God had commanded that incense only be burnt on the altar, in the tabernacle, then the temple, and only by the priesthood of Aaron (Exodus 30:1-10, 34-38). On Bethel's altar, Jeroboam offered sacrifices and burnt incense, by a priesthood not chosen of God. All of these things Jeroboam did for the people of Israel. The displeasure of God with Jeroboam in these changes of worship is noted in I Kings 13:1-3.

These series of events were never reversed; Israel and Judah became two nations within a nation, two places of worship, two priesthoods, two altars, etc. This division remained until the two nations (Israel and Judah) were carried away into captivity.

These events that split the Israelites, the people of God, so long ago are very important to our understanding in relating to the Church today.

There are many parallels in this chronicle of Israel that are seen in the churches of today; let us first look at the similarities between Jerusalem and the Church.

## Chapter 2

### Jerusalem

1. God established His presence in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34), and in the temple (1 Kings 8:10).

2. God, in the Pentateuch, gave instructions to Israel for worship, Israel's part was obedience (Exodus 19:5).

3. God gave Israel the priesthood through Moses, to Aaron and his sons (Exodus 28:1). This priesthood was given Israel forever on the earth (Exodus 28:43).

4. In Leviticus, chapter 23, God established days set apart,

### The Church

1. Jesus established His presence in the Church (Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21).

2. Jesus stated the Father's design for worship in John 4:23-24. In the Church (Mark 14:22-24; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:22-26).

3. In the Church, God, through Christ Jesus has created a new priesthood, establishing every Christian as a priest eternally (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

4. To the Church, God gave the Lord of the Sabbath (s)

holy days and feasts. These days were known as Sabbaths.

5. Sacrifices and incense burning were Israel's duties and commandments (Exodus 30:1-10, 34-38).

(Mark 2:28), and a continual feast in Christ, the bread of life (John 6:51-59; 14:23; Revelation 3:20).

5. To the Church, the Israel's sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and the sweet savor of His life being poured out fulfilled all that God had required (Ephesians 5:2).

The six changes Jeroboam made in Samaria at Bethel and Dan, from what God had established at Jerusalem, are also seen in changes in the churches of this day. These six foundational changes have redirected the churches away from what Christ had established through the apostles, at the beginning of the Church. The practice of these truths was to be continued until the Church is caught up to be with Jesus. The six changes are:

### **In the Church**

**1. Object Worship:** Idolatry, Jeroboam made golden calves as an object or medium of worshipping God (1 Kings 12:28).

In the churches, many objects or mediums have been put between God and the people. In the Roman, Greek, Russian, and other denominational churches, the use of

rosary beads, statues, candles, aberrations, Mary, the Pope, the Patriarchs, the priests, the church, and many other objects and mediums are put forth as the way to reach God. In Protestant and Independent churches, putting faith in the clergy, the founder of a denomination or independent church, signs and wonders, only what the pastor states, baptism, or spiritual experiences, is the medium to reach God.

For the Christian, idolatry is anything that takes him away from or becomes a medium to his allegiance to Christ.

The Scriptures teach us there is only one mediator between God and man, “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 12:24). Christians meeting unto Christ in His completeness, without the changes that men have initiated, is still God’s choice of mediation and worship for man. Scripture instructs Christians to meet unto Christ, in His completeness, without the changes that men have initiated.

**2. Place of Worship:** Jeroboam started places of worship at Bethel and Dan far away from Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:28-29).

In the professing church of today, the gathering place of Jerusalem that Jesus gave to his Church has come to mean many different man founded ideas. For example, some church people gather to a building, edifice, cathedral or sanctuary, to others, to people, a pastor, a good teacher,

high spiritual leader, or clergyman. To some it means gathering to things, a denomination, spirit manifestations, Sunday school program, evangelism program, or this or that division of the church, yet to others to philosophies, traditions culture heritage, or the Sabbath. These misaligned purposes of meeting are far away from the Jerusalem that Jesus had established for His Church.

The instructions that Jesus gave to every believer have not changed for 2000 years. The Jerusalem for every Christian in gathering together is; “Where two or three are gathered unto my name there am I in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). The gathering place given of God for Christians is still in simplicity unto Christ Jesus with no add-ons.

**3. Order of Priesthood:** Jeroboam appointed and anointed his own priests to lead worship and continue in the changes that he had made (1 Kings 12:31).

This change effectively kept God’s people away from Jerusalem, and sufficed them with a false priesthood. Those chosen of God for this purpose, the Levites, were not allowed to practice their priesthood at Bethel or Dan. Jeroboam used the loyalty of the people to himself, to direct the people away from the order of worship that God had established in Jerusalem.

The order of man appointed priesthood in the churches today is in direct contradiction to individual priesthood which God has established. Today, priesthood exists in the

churches only for those appointed and anointed by denominations, independent churches, the clergy, and all the other various church related organizations. In general, only these men or women have official capacity to serve their organizations.

God has appointed every Christian a priest unto God (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:5-6). This gift of priesthood from God is in contrast to man's appointed priesthood.

God did not make Christians priests for service at Dan or Bethel (organizations of man), but for service to the Jerusalem above (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22). The believers' priesthood is to be exercised in the full freedom and privilege of the Holy Spirit working within him. His priesthood, given of God, is not subject to the structures of men, hierarchy of men, denominations, clericalism, culture, traditions, etc. The Christian's priesthood is a gift and work of the Holy Spirit; to be exercised for the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of men. However, the Christian's priesthood should always be aligned with those who call on the Lord out of a receptive and pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22).

**4. Altar of God:** Jeroboam changed the altar from Jerusalem to Bethel (1 Kings 12:33).

The priests who were ordained of God, of the tribe of Levi, set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, they left the altar at Bethel and went to the altar of God at Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 11:16).

The altar of God for the Christian is Calvary, where the Lamb of God was crucified. Christians gathered unto Christ crucified is the altar God has established (1 Corinthians 2:2; 3:11). The Word of God warns of Satan corrupting the minds of church people and directing them away from the simplicity of Christ crucified (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). Today, the altar of God has been changed (for the most part), to gathering to one of the many separate sects in Christendom (1 Corinthians 1:12-13). These include charismatic leaders (1 Corinthians 3:4), to churches that do not teach believers that their place is in humility at the cross (1 Corinthians 4:8), and churches that do not require a believer, to believe the Scripture or practice it's message (Luke 6:46), churches that are full of emotion and puffery, where the truth of the crucified life in Christ is foreign (1 Corinthians 4:18), the Nicolaitan system, (clergy/laity, Revelation 2:6, 15), and churches that do not discern between the world, its ways, its culture, and the Lord's Body (1 Corinthians 11:29; 1 John 2:15-17).

**5. Feast Days:** The changing of holy days and feasts were next in Jeroboam's attempt to imitate Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:32).

Over the centuries, Christendom has changed the feast that God has provided for believers; that feast being Christ (John 6:51-59). Holy days and feasts, founded by men,

have become the standard in Christendom. This may include: Christmas, Easter, Halloween (all saints day), Lent, and others. Holy days in the professing church have become accepted as normal; these days are set before the people, as a way to know Christ in His life, as He walked on the earth before going to the cross. Scripture teaches us this: “You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Galatians 4:10-11). Again it is written: “... Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” (2 Corinthians 5:16).

The attempt to know Christ in the flesh today is an attempt to relate to God by some material or physical means, such as holy days (religious holidays). Any man attempting to see or relate to God through his own natural religious nature, will be disappointed. Feasting on Christ in the spirit, in His death (Philippians 3:10), is the feast that God has provided, and the only way that a believer can know God. “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56). This is spiritual eating and drinking as Jesus said: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

**6. Incense:** Jeroboam offered up false incense upon a false altar (1 Kings 12:33).

In Exodus 30:34-38 God gave instructions to Israel regarding the making of incense. Incense was to be used for burning on the altar to God. The penalty for anyone making incense for their own purpose was, that they were to be cut off from the people of God.

The work of Christ is the fulfillment and reality of the scent of that incense. "...as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:2).

The incense that God has made in Christ for the Church has been changed by man to something else. Man has made incense that is fashioned after man's idea of what incense should be. The incense that man has made is being offered up to God in our day. The incense of man's making has been changed to salvation by: man's works, the mass (offering up Jesus on the altar daily), baptism, man's holiness (touch not, taste not, handle not Colossians 2:21), Sabbath keeping, equality of women in church leadership (diversity), my ministry, my church, paying my tithes, keeping all or part of the Law of Moses, and performing signs and wonders. These are only some of the changes of incense that man has made.

The work of Jesus, finished from the foundation of the world, His life being poured out unto death, is the sweet

incense of God. The sweetness of the incense of Christ is the only incense that God receives. God has given Christ as the incense prepared for a sweet savor unto Himself.

A Christian who will put away all the incense of man's making, and who will live and walk only in the incense of Christ, will be in the following place; "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:13).

### **Chapter 3**

God has given every Christian a new nature, so he can live with power over sin and confidence toward God. God has put the seed of renewal in the believer to recreate him anew into the image of His Son. This newness of life, which He has given to the believer, is designed to be lived entirely in responsiveness to God, as Jesus lived His life to His Father.

In John 8:29 Jesus said, "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

Christians are not to take upon themselves a direction that is opposed to the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:13; 6:8), but neither are they to take hold of the things of Christ and use them to enhance natural or religious flesh. Using the things of God to build up the religious systems of men, suppresses

the work of the Holy Spirit and undermines the purpose of God for His Church

(I Corinthians 3:1). Most people, following this pathway of man's religious systems, are not aware of the compromised position that they occupy. However, Jesus made it clear, that with God there is no compromise or changing the Word of God, for the convenience of men's religious systems. Jesus, when Satan tried to tempt Him, quoted Scripture. He said: "It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

The ten tribes who lived in Samaria had not ceased to be God's earthly people, but they had been deprived of the place of blessing that God had provided for them. However, their turning away from true worship would eventually lead them into captivity in Assyria for transgressing the word of the Lord.

The woman of Samaria at the well (John 4:20), was a part of the religious system of Samaria of that day. Jesus told her she worshipped she knew not what, for worship was of the Jews (John 4:22). As it is written: "In Jerusalem do I choose to put my name" (1 Kings 9:3; 2 Kings 21:4). God had spoken these words to make it known that true worship could only be connected with Jerusalem. Jesus did not call into question the sincerity of the Samaritan woman's worship, but told her, the place she worshipped at was not of God.

## Chapter 4

Hezekiah became king of Judah at 25 years of age. Hezekiah became aware of the sins which the fathers before him committed by instituting places of worship outside Jerusalem. This brought a day of religious confusion in Judah. Hezekiah took a different pathway than the evil committed by the kings who ruled before him. It is written of Hezekiah that, “He did what was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 29:2). Hezekiah set about to re-establish proper worship in Judah. Hezekiah said: “For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord, and turned their backs on Him” (2 Chronicles 29:6).

In the rest of chapter 29 of 2 Chronicles we are shown how Hezekiah restored worship to what God had originally commanded Israel to practice. The people received these changes with an open heart. “Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly” (2 Chronicles 29:36).

After Israel repented of the evil of their fathers, Hezekiah turned to Samaria. In 2 Chronicles chapter 30, it is recorded that Hezekiah next attempted to return those that lived in Samaria back to Jerusalem and away from Bethel and Dan. He sent the message to the people throughout

Samaria to be restored to Jerusalem and be reunited to the place which God had established for their blessing.

However, the message was not received by the people in Samaria. It is recorded in

2 Chronicles 30:10, that some mocked and some laughed.

They believed the place they occupied for worship at Bethel and Dan was a better place than what God had to offer.

Deceptive inventions of the mind of man had become the standard religious practices in Samaria.

## **Chapter 5**

The Christian needs to be aware that the best, man has to offer is found lacking when compared with the Jerusalem of God. For the Christian, the Jerusalem above cannot be brought into the religious inventions of men (Galatians 4:26; 5:1; Hebrews 12:22).

A Christian with the knowledge that his place is at the Jerusalem above, as set forth of God, and desires to bless others with this knowledge should be acting in the place of humility. The Holy Spirit can only use a Christian who is acting in humility to the Word of God, to help other believers who are unaware of the truths of Christ and His Kingdom (Isaiah 66:2; John 16:14-15). A believer who has become aware of the truth of worshipping and gathering to the name of Christ alone, and desires to follow the truth of

Christ apart from the religious interventions of men, and wishes to gain deliverance from the place of Bethel and Dan, must turn his pathway to look upon Christ and wait for the leading of the Holy Spirit. Only He can open the eyes of the heart to the understanding of the simplicity, which is in Christ Jesus. Only He can teach the believer the difference between flesh and spirit. The promise of Jesus is; "...When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will lead you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13).

God related His displeasure with Bethel, and prophesied that "Bethel shall come to naught" (Amos 5:5). The Word of the Lord then and now is "Seek the Lord and you shall live" (Amos 5:6). For the Christian there is no spiritual life in Bethel; seek the Jerusalem above and live.

The Christian's place is to follow only the voice of Jesus and put away all other voices. Only in following the voice of Jesus will he find deliverance. The Holy Spirit is able to deliver the believer from Bethel and Dan, which has so successfully masqueraded as Jerusalem. In deliverance he will find the greater riches in Christ Jesus. For we have this promise: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of

His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:18).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14)

## **Chapter 6**

### **- An example for the believer to consider**

God, in attempting to lead Israel into the land of Canaan, the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, continually had to deal with a stiff necked, resisting people (Exodus 33:3, 5). Moses had much vexation of spirit in attempting to lead Israel as they followed anything but the word of the Lord. Finally, Moses pitched the tent of the tabernacle outside the camp of Israel (Exodus 33:7). This was to separate those who would follow the Lord, from those who were religious, but did not want the word of the Lord. Those who sought the Lord in truth and true worship had to go outside the camp. In verse 9, Moses went out of the camp and entered the tabernacle, and the Lord met and spoke with him there. In verse 10 every man stood in his own doorway and worshipped. Moses, like Noah, found grace in the eyes of the Lord for one reason, he believed God rather than man (Exodus 33:17).

The call of God was for all men to come out of the camp and into the tabernacle where He was. Every man

however, stood in his doorway and worshipped with the exception of Joshua who stayed in the tabernacle (Exodus 33:11). The men in Israel did not heed the word of the Lord but attempted to worship according to their own mind and heart. Compromise in human relationships is many times the balm that brings health, but in the things of the kingdom of God, it spells death (Ephesians 5:14; Revelations 3:1). Israel's history gives us a clear picture of this.

The message in Revelation chapter two and three, to each of the seven churches is: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The believer's need to hear and respond in faith has full application today. For we are still in the Church Age and the word to the Christian is: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). Only by departing from religious ideas of man and all that is not of the kingdom of Christ, and going forth to the Lord Jesus outside the camp, will a believer enter into the freedom of Christ. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

## **Finish**

There is nothing in the Word of God to compel the Christian to follow the systems of men (Bethel). The pathway of grace and truth is in the Chief Shepherd's voice alone.

The message to the Christian who has read this pamphlet, and whose heart the Holy Spirit has quickened is this; seek out those who would gather to the name of the Lord Jesus alone. Seek those who do not desire to mix the purpose of God with the purposes and ambitions of men. God has sent the best that heaven has to offer in His Son. “In Him is life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

The religious systems of men, shown in this pamphlet, are a tremendous hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit, which is to lead His people into the knowledge and goodness of Christ Jesus. The Christian’s purpose then should be to search the Scriptures for the truth of Christ, to seek out those who would follow the Lord Jesus according to the grace of God and seek to follow the truth of the revelation of the Lord Jesus. The call of God to every Christian is to respond to the Jerusalem above plus nothing else. The systems that men have added (Bethel and Dan), to the perfect plan of worship, to which God has called every Christian (the heavenly Jerusalem), only leads away from the Lord Jesus and His word. The Christian is not called to stand in his tent door and worship but to go outside the camp unto Christ. “Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:13-14). The pathway of faith for a Christian is to go unto the tent outside the camp. “But you are come

unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22).

“If a man loves me he will keep my word” (John 14:23).

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