

The New Crusade

It's time for a New Crusade for a New Revival of New Testament Christianity. This magazine will be dedicated to such an end.

EDITOR'S NOTE TO READERS

In this issue of The New Crusade we are dealing with *Apostasy & Famine* in the Church. The general trend in the church today is that most want to be positive and not to mention anything negative.

We live in a Church age that will talk readily about revival, miracles and blessings but will not deal clearly with the present departure from God's Word and ways by those called 'the church.'

By now I am sure you realise I very much believe in the God of Revivals. I believe it is His will to revive His Church and to bless her abundantly with His manifest presence. But to accept a mixture of worldliness with godliness as the pathway to revival is utter deception.

Just as the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New, lays before us very clear practical teaching on revival, it also in the same manner lays before us very clear and serious warnings about departures among God's people from God-ordained ways, will, pattern, and the purpose of God.

What is apostasy? The Bible teaches that it is a recurring pattern amongst God's people. Just read the book of Judges, the history of the Kings of Israel and Judah and the ministry of the last apostles of Christ at the end of the apostolic era. All biblical history records not only recurring revivals but recurring apostasies amongst God's people.

That is why at present we have a flood of new gimmicks, strategies and new ways to reach the lost! That is why we have leaders who just share but never preach. That is why we have so much teaching that does not deal with sin, error or repentance. That is why we have so many warnings about 'not being condemned.' That is why all we hear on every hand is a people who say 'But we are under grace.'

Paul said "*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.*" Gal 1:6-8

These are very strong words to the Churches of Galatia which had come under the influences of other apostles. Some of them were true apostles like Peter who had become misguided, but most were false apostles and deceivers.

Such times call for strong preaching. It has always been that way. Yet now is the very time on the left and right that we are being told to mellow our message, to temper it and to accept a methodology that has never been acceptable to the true Church of God.

Rank apostasy has set in yet the church wants to hold a party. False teaching has blinded us from the terrible tragedy of apostasy in the House of God.

The last Judge of Israel was Samson – the enemy blinded him! The last King of Israel was Zedekiah – the enemy blinded him! The last Church of Revelation was Laodicea – she blinded herself! Jdg.16:20-21; Jer.52:11; Rev.3v17.

This is the great danger of this last church age before Jesus returns. Most of what we see of the church in the West is the result of blindness. How do I know that? I hear continually 'Oh I do not see things that way. This is a new generation. We can't do things in the Church like they were done 40 years ago.' And again they say 'I don't see anything wrong with social drinking. I don't see anything wrong with having flashing lights and loud music to attract the young. I don't see anything wrong with clowns and entertainment in the church. I don't see anything wrong with the prosperity gospel.' That is because you are blind!

Again Paul warned the Church that such would exist at the end of time and prophetically warned, "*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;*" 1Tim.4:1. This word depart or *aphistēmi* means to remove; to instigate a revolt; to desist, desert, draw away; to fall away.

Again he says, "*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*" II Thess.2:3. This word falling away or *apostasia* means a defection from truth or a forsaking of truth. Before Antichrist appears, a great apostasy or falling away from truth will come to the visible church.

"*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.*" II Tim.4:3

Jesus also warned about an end day apostasy. He constantly warned his disciples "*Take heed that no man deceive you.*" (Mt.24v14.) This is the word *planaō* meaning to roam from safety, truth, and virtue; to go astray, deceive, err, seduce, wander; to be out of the way.

The word apostasy has close connections with the word adultery and divorce. It literally means a moving away or a departure from the Word of God. We are presently in an hour of apostasy but praise God we are seeking a genuine Heaven Sent Revival within the true Church.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Keith Malcomson
September 2009

THE SILENT MILLSTONES:

A Cry for Revival

By Yorrie Richards

Some years ago I had quite an amazing experience whilst reading the book of Jeremiah. I felt the Lord begin to reveal something of the very heart of the book, which is the cry of God for the return of the southern kingdom of Judah back to Himself. The effect the reading had upon me was something I could not explain or had bargained for and I was beginning to feel something of the rejection God was going through.

Sitting down with my Bible spread over my knees, tears were beginning to flow freely down my face. I began to realise that all the crying; the calling; the heartache and hurt was coming from God toward Judah. God called this young prophet Jeremiah, *“Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem saying; ‘I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal when you went after me in the wilderness...Israel was holiness to the Lord...’”* (Jer.2:2-3). *“What injustice have your fathers found in me that you have gone far from me and followed idols”* (2:6). *“They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water”* (2:13).

I tried to continue reading, but found it so difficult that I eventually had to stop. I walked out of the room and Eirian, my wife, seeing me crying asked if anything was wrong. I showed her some of the verses that had brought me to tears. I have never forgotten that experience and it eventually led to the birth of a message which I entitled *“The Crying Heart of God”*.

The following study is not that message, but is rooted in it. This message is very much alive in my heart at the moment due to the fact that I see much the same situation prevalent in the church today as found in the days of Jeremiah.

Introduction

The book of Jeremiah records the prophetic ministry of a man called in his youth from the priest-city of Anathoth, just over two miles north of Jerusalem. This heartbroken prophet carried a heartbreaking message and laboured for more than forty years proclaiming a call to repentance to the stiff-necked people of Judah. Yet he is despised and persecuted due to such a ministry. He bathes his harsh prophecies in tears, becoming known as the ‘weeping prophet’. His preaching declared that a total surrender to God’s will is the only way to escape an impending calamity, and that disaster was a judgement which God told Jeremiah would come from the north (in Scripture, judgement always comes from the north. Even the sacrifices offered by the priests were killed on the north side of the altar (Lev.1:11). Golgotha, ‘The place of the skull’; that dreadful spot where Christ our Saviour shed His precious blood stands at the north side of the city of Jerusalem and is the actual location where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac. How precise God is!).

A Patient God

Two young men appeared on the scene in Israel following the death of Solomon. One was Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, the other a very promising young man called Jeroboam, a well-trusted and important servant of Solomon. Solomon’s death brought Rehoboam to the throne but his reign, which lasted for seventeen years, was not a good one. Through some very serious but unwise decisions he caused a rift within the then-united Israel which resulted in the breakaway of ten of the

twelve tribes. They set up their kingdom in Samaria and Jeroboam was chosen as their king. But his reign brought the northern tribes into an ‘orgy’ of unrestricted idolatry. I call it ‘suicidal idolatry’ for that is what it became. He set up two golden calves, one in Bethel, the other in Dan and also built a temple and established his own independent priest system as he wanted to divert Israel from going to Jerusalem to worship. All this was a dreadful violation of the commands of God who had made it clear that the tribes were to worship there. Jeroboam consciously set about fostering a separate identity of Israel. So what finally became of the northern tribes? Following the reign of nineteen kings, of whom none followed the Lord, the tribes were finally overrun by the Assyrians in 722BC, becoming known as the “lost tribes of Israel” due to the terrible method of the dispersion of captives. By contrast, Judah lasted one hundred and thirty years longer due to the fact that out of twenty kings, eight were good and did what was right.

Enter Jeremiah

Jeremiah was called as a prophet during the reign of Josiah, the last of Israel’s good kings. He tried to stem the tide of apostasy through well-meaning reforms, but failed. The downhill slide of Judah goes on into sin and idolatry and continues unabated through a succession of four godless kings; they wallow in apostasy.

In the book of Jeremiah, God is seen as patient and holy; He delays judgement and appeals through this young prophet to His people Judah, calling them to repentance before it is too late.

In Jeremiah 18:2, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah; *“Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear my words”*. In obedience Jeremiah goes to the potter and watches as he skilfully throws a lump of clay onto the spinning wheel and begins to form it into a vessel. Then something happens, the clay loses its shape and crumples into a formless mass, but the potter takes it again, presses it into a ball and throws the clay again onto the wheel, recreating another form. As Jeremiah watches this action taking place, something warms in his heart and he states, *“Then the word of the Lord came to me saying: O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter? Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel”* (Verses 3-6). The prophet has received the basis of another message to deliver to the God-rejecting people. And what is the word he is to bring? *“Thus says the Lord: “Behold I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good”* (Jeremiah 18: 11). But what was the response to such a message?

“That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will, every one do the imagination of his evil heart” (Verse 12). How much like the book of Judges is that statement: *“Every man did what was right in his own eyes!”* (Judges 17:6) How blatant a rejection of the word of God and yet one only has to read the rest of the chapter to see the crying heart of a patient God and to hear the open, horrific rejection to His pleadings. Because they refuse to repent or even listen to God’s prophet, the divine cure is going to require radical surgery.

One can well imagine the sheer frustration of Jeremiah. How long can he continue preaching to a rebellious people? He often desires to resign from his prophetic office due to the harshness of his message and its hostile reception and he tells

us a little of how he felt in chapter twenty: *“Then I said, “I will not make mention of God, nor speak any more in His Name” Yet his understandable feelings are more than he could ever sustain - “But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back”*. (20:9). Listen to how depressed he really is; *“Cursed be the day in which I was born! Let not the day be blessed in which my mother bore me...why did I come forth from the womb to see labour and sorrow?”* (20:14-18)

What a terrible loneliness he obviously felt, much like Elijah when he cried to the Lord: *“I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life”* (1 Kings 19:10).

In Jeremiah 25 we hear the prophet say; *“This is the twenty-third year in which the word of the Lord has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened, nor inclined your ear to hear.”* (Verse 4)

“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not heard my words...behold, I will send and take all the families of the north says the Lord and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant and will bring them against this land, against the inhabitants, and against these nations all around...” (25: 8-9)

Please note the list of things God states He was going to take from Judah in verses 10-11: *“Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the groom, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp, and this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years”*.

Millstones were the means of grinding the corn and wheat for the production of bread. The sound of grinding must have been a very familiar and perhaps even comforting to the people. But God tells them that the sound of grinding would be heard in the land no longer. What does that speak of?

Famine!

The Scriptures speak a lot of famine. In fact, there are thirteen famines recorded in the Bible and a number of them are the result of judgement. One only has to read the first chapter of the book of Joel as he speaks to the southern kingdom of Judah to see the effects of famine on the house of God.

The prophet Elijah was sent by God to face up to the incredibly evil king Ahab and tell him; *“As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, there shall be no dew or rain these years except at my word”* (1Sam.17:1). Elijah knew the word and aligned his word with God’s! No prophet can simply do signs and wonders without a clear knowledge of the principles of Scripture. The principles laid out in the Bible tell us the way God will work in any given situation. Elijah realised that the covenant laid out in Deuteronomy 28 stated that if Israel walked in obedience, great blessing would be upon them and the land. Scripture links Israel and the land together. Like fish and water; love and marriage. The covenant with Abraham involved his descendants and the land.

Elijah also knew full well that if Israel walked in rebellion, then God would stop the rains. No mention is made of the duration of that famine in 1 Samuel, but according to James in his epistle it lasted three years six months. (Jm.5:17) Scientists

show that it takes about three years for a famine to establish itself. It is a slow, creeping mother of all disasters, turning fertile ground into sun-cracked desert. There is no rain because of a closed up heaven.

It is my sincere understanding that the church and our land go together. Can I ask you this: have there been signs in our nation that show a possible disfavour with God? Again in my understanding, there is an abundance of such. I recall our televisions showing huge fires in the countryside with the hooves of cattle pointing upwards as the fires consumed their carcasses during the foot and mouth outbreak. Lorry loads of slaughtered sheep driven to huge holes in the ground for burial. Joel states; *“Even the flocks of sheep suffer your punishment!”* (Joel 1:18) We have seen massive areas of England being flooded, rending thousands of homes uninhabitable. I could go on, but I am sure you understand where I come from in my thinking.

Spiritual Famine In The land

Two Minor Prophets Bring a Major Message

There is a very poignant portion of Scripture found in Amos 8:11: *“Behold, the days are coming”* says the Lord *“That I will send a famine in the land. Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea and from the north to the east; they shall run to and fro seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it.”*

Joel also speaks a crisp, sharp, and powerful prophetic declaration to the southern tribes of Israel. He is also very precise as to where the famine is really located *“...The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off [taken away] from the house of the Lord!”* (Joel 1:9) He continues, *“The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered...all the trees of the field are withered; surely joy has withered away from the sons of men!”* (Joel 1:12) Oh, hear Joel’s urgent cry; *“Gird yourselves and lament you priests, wail you who minister before the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth you who minister to my God; for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God!”* (Joel 1:13) Verse 16 is an echo of what Jeremiah has spoken would be removed from God’s people; *“Is not the food cut off before your eyes? Joy and gladness from the house of our God!”*

What a clear description of spiritual famine. Amos, the farmer turned prophet, lashes out at the greed and injustice which was festering in his time. Coupled to that was the hypocritical religious motions that had replaced true worship. Famine, drought, plagues, death and destruction – nothing could bring the people to their knees in repentance. Five times in his book we read the phrase; *“...Yet you have not returned to me”* ‘says the Lord’. A further eight times we also read; *“I will not turn away its punishment.”* Amos would not be a popular choice of speaker in many religious conventions of our land today and Jeremiah would also join him in being marginalised!

To say the least, Jeremiah’s declaration of impending judgement was not received too well: There was conflict with the nation who called for his execution (26:1-24), a further clash with a group of false prophets (27:1-22) - and yet more with a very popular prophet called Hananiah (28:1-17).

Hananiah prophesied what the people wanted to hear, bringing the ‘positive’ message; he certainly never spoke of judgement as a consequence of sin. The people would flock to hear his exciting preaching, his message bringing them to their feet in applause! Yet the awful truth was; the people believed a lie – a

very convincing lie, but nevertheless one which would bring them into judgement and ultimately cost Hananiah his life (28:16-17).

Hananiah Is 'Still Alive' Today!

There is certainly no shortage today of preachers that have taken up the baton of Hananiah. They are popular speakers who command a following of thousands, but their preaching, though exciting and sometimes plausible, is *"another Gospel"* that the Apostle Paul warned would come: *"For I know this that, after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves..."* (Acts 20:29-31)

Their preaching and teachings are often centralised on financial prosperity. They are very skilled in placing a guilt complex (one of the worst forms of spiritual abuse) on those who do not support them financially - one big name even pronounces curses on those who do open their wallets! Yet their popularity flourishes as thousands of beguiled believers flock to take in their teaching. I dread to think what the reaction of the Apostle Paul would be if he saw what has been done to the Church of God today.

"Christ led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men". (Eph.4:8) but what have we done to those gifts? We have turned them into a multi-million pound making industry! We have turned praise and worship into copyrighted material, so if you want to sing it you have to pay for it! Some of these 'teachers' even fly about in their personal jets. Hananiah would be a very popular prophet today! As a result of all this, no longer can the Church say *"Silver and gold have I none"*, but neither can we say *"In the Name of Jesus rise up and walk!"*

The State of the Nation Reflects the State of the Church

Things are certainly not all doom and gloom, for there are a people who are waking up and realise we cannot go like this. Our nation is suffering and is showing signs that we are not walking as we should. The book of Judges stands out in stark contrast to that of Joshua where an obedient people conquered the land. In Judges however, a disobedient and idolatrous people are defeated time and time again. Someone once said; *"Religious apostasy and social and moral depravity will always be found going hand-in-hand together."*

The crying heart of God over the idolatry of Judah is the pulse that throbs in the book of Jeremiah. God calls and pleads through this very sensitive prophet for Judah to return to Him. Not too many years ago God was sending many Godly preachers of the Word with a ministry of repentance to the church. The burden of my preaching was also taking the same ministry and I experienced a mighty move of God one night at a church in Blackpool after preaching on this subject - we did not come out of the church until nearly midnight. Yes, God was calling us to return. Shocking as it may sound, at one service where I brought the Word, I actually heard one Pastor sitting behind me on the platform say *"Oh no, not repentance again!"*

A verse of Scripture which spoke to me very strongly some years ago is found in Ecclesiastes 8:11: *"Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."* One vital principle of God found in Scripture is the fact that He gives time for repentance and that principle is prominent in the book of Jeremiah. The prophet's ministry spanned nearly forty

years as he pleaded with Judah. Just listen to the aching heart of God: *"What injustice have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me and followed idols?"* (Jer.2:5). *"They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns; broken cisterns that can hold no water."* (2:13)

I could go on, but please allow me to give you just one more short reading; *"Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people, and go from them..."* (9:1-2). Can you feel the pain? If a prophet is anything, he is a man who reflects the heart of God and Jeremiah's preaching did just that. Jeremiah was the weeping prophet because God was crying also!

When I read the parable of the prodigal son that is mistakenly used as a Gospel message, I don't see a wandering, lost sinner whom God is calling to Himself: No, I see the church that has lost her way.

I hear the prosperity teachers say; *"Let's claim our inheritance; it's ours!"* Like the prodigal son, *"Give me what is mine."* Luke 15:12. But guess what brought him to his senses? *"A severe famine in the land!"* (Luke 15:14) That worked for him!

Today, there is an honest confession among God's people because of the realisation that we are not walking as we should, and it is time to seek the Lord. There is a longing for the return of the Glory of God in the midst of the church. *"There is a cloud as small as a man's hand"* reported the servant of Elijah. (1 Kings 18:44)

Take heart people of God; for He is not in the habit of failing - the rain is on its way!

JOASH: RISE, REVIVAL AND REBELLION

PART 2

*By William Graham
Missionary to Spain*

Joash's Wickedness

I wish I could end the message right here. But the truth demands that I continue. I promised I would share about Joash's rise and revival but I also mentioned his rebellion. Our text tells us that Joash did the will of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, that godly influence steered the nation of Judah in the right direction. With Jehoiada, all was well. But the moment he went, untold disaster breaks loose. The princes of Judah came to him, and through their flattery, persuaded the king to build groves and idols. It's a proud and carnal man that listens to flattery. The man of God knows that he's a no-one, and if he thinks otherwise, he's a fool (Gal.6:3). In being so easily led astray, Joash rejected the Lord. Apostasy was setting in. In spite of the great revival of the true worship of the Lord and the restoration of the Temple of the Lord, Joash's was more in love with his own self than with the Lord. He had experienced the glory of revival, yet rejected the Lord as soon as the man of God was out of the road. When a revival is left in the hands of godless men the result is calamity. George Whitefield wrote: *"As God can send a nation or people no greater blessing than to give them faithful, sincere and upright ministers, so the greatest curse that God can possibly send upon a people in this world, is to give them over to blind, unregenerate, carnal, lukewarm and unskilled guides"*. It

would have been better that Joash went to the grave rather than Jehoiada. The revival was mere sensationalism and emotionalism: where were the lasting effects on the hearts of the people of God?

We know that the groves and idols were built to cover up the awfulness of the altar-sacrifices. People who want groves are those who want the sting taken out of the Gospel message. Tone the message down- don't take the Word so seriously! "Yes, talk to me about Jesus meek and mild, tell me about the Saviour who did good to all and loves us all no matter what we do. But don't talk to me about death to self, about a whole-hearted commitment to God, about the necessity of a life of prayer, holiness and obedience to the commands of the Almighty God of judgment and wrath. Don't preach against sin".

It's the whole Gospel or it's no Gospel. This Book is worth everything or it's worth nothing, and if you take anything out of it or add anything to it, you're in trouble.

It's interesting that these princes, sons of Belial, came to Joash when Jehoiada was dead. That man of God would have never given a moment's notice to that rubbish. The Holy Ghost always expels that which is uncrucified. Flattery and popularity deceived the king's heart. God's judgement was going to come.

We don't build groves (altars to the goddess Ashtorath or trees) today in the church; but we do bring in entertainment and trust in man's wisdom, strength and riches. Nowadays we've everything to offer the world except the fiery Gospel of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Worldliness in the church doesn't speak to me of success and growth; it speaks to me of defeat and failure. A church that has stopped dwelling in the secret place of the Almighty! Why is it that it's always the folk who pray most who are the weariest and most worried about bringing in schemes and strategies into the house of the Lord?

Apostasy comes when man falls from grace. He rejects the Holy Spirit and decides to walk in his own way. Paul wrote to the Ephesian church the most wonderful Epistle, revealing the spiritual glories, truths and riches that are found in Jesus – some call it "the Alps of the NT" – it makes your heart warm to read it. But 40 years later John writes to exactly the same church and rebuked it for their love had grown cold for God. What started in revival doesn't always necessarily end in revival. Once the hand of man touches the move of God, it dies.

Joash had no spiritual hunger or commitment to, or firmness in, God. Before God sent His judgment, He warned the king by raising up prophets. The Spirit of God filled Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, who prophesied thus to Joash: "*Thus says the Lord, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you!*" You never hear a word like that from the pulpit nowadays where all are at ease in Zion. A pastor once told me that we shouldn't preach against sin in case we upset the people. Here we find a Spirit-filled man and the message cuts sin to the heart.

You don't have to be an expert to know that Zechariah was going to pay with his life for his message. As apostasy set in, God still had a people willing to preach His true Word. There are still 7,000 who haven't bowed the knee to Baal.

Joash killed Zechariah. Could he be any more ungrateful? He was rescued by Zechariah's mum as a baby; protected and coronated by Zechariah's father. And he stoned him to death in God's house. Pure grace had rescued him. Pure grace put him on the throne. For crying out loud, he was a seven-year old boy. And yet look how he repays God and His prophet.

Savonarola rose up with holy fire burning within his bones before the European Reformation, preaching against sin, idolatry and superstition. He burned vanities in the streets of Florence and preached of coming judgement. Thousands came to hear this man whose words were as lightning. But when their hearts grew cold, they took him to the place where he had previously burned the dirt and filth of the revived people, and burnt him at the stake. Preaching the Truth will cost you something. A friend called Ralph asked me, "When was the last time you were stoned on the street?" If we preach the first-century Gospel, we'll face the first-century persecution.

The prophets are like thunderstorms – they go against the wind, terrify sinners and cleanse the air. May such souls arise once again in this decadent age. Men who have the air of another world about them: men who have spent day and night in prayer to God and speak in the Name of God Almighty and righteousness.

Judgment

God wasn't going to stand for this. The Jewish tradition teaches that Joash's sin was seven-fold in killing Zechariah. He killed a prophet, a priest, a judge, shed innocent blood, on the Sabbath and on the Day of Expiation.

He killed a sacred man with a sacred message in a sacred place on a sacred day.

Call a man ungrateful and you can call him no else. Joash had rejected God and experienced one torment after another. His last state was worse than the first. The gold had become dim, the fine silver had changed. He began in the Spirit and ended in the flesh.

Hazael of Syria invaded Gath, and Joash in fear bribed him by offering him the riches and goods of the Temple of the Lord. Far from God, he feared man and impoverished the nation of Judah in the process. He held the things of God in little esteem, and the Lord was the only One who could deliver him from foreign invasion. His carnal methods failed him, for in a years time Hazael came back and as Joash had nothing to bribe him with, they went to battle and he ransacked the nation. Joash was left afflicted in mind and body and was killed by his own servants while asleep in his bed. Here we see the lot of a man that forsakes the Lord. Satan came to seduce him first, then he persecuted him. If you give the devil any space in your life, it's only a matter of time before he destroys you. He knows no mercy. You kill him or he kills you. It's a fight to the death.

Conclusion

Joash died in torment and agony, killed and hated by his own people, faced by the wrath of a jealous God. Jehoiada took his stand in God, paid the price, and lived to see the glory of the Lord in his generation. He saw the salvation of the Lord. Are you a Joash or are you a Jehoiada? Will you take the stand? Will you pay the price? Will you seek God no matter what the cost? 99% won't do in the kingdom of God. A lot of folk have given their lives to Jesus, but very few have given their all to Him.

IDENTIFYING ANTICHRIST

By Pastor Peter Bond

II Thess.2:1-4 & I John 2:18 -19

The Appeal of Love

The apostle John is often referred to as the 'apostle of love'. This was the disciple who had leaned on the Saviour's breast at the last supper. This was the disciple that recorded Jesus' famous words to Nicodemus in John 3:16 *'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.'* John was, therefore, well qualified to exhort the saints of God in later life with these words: *'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that Loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.'* (I John 4:7).

Love *'rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in truth'* so writes the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13:6. Love makes no pretence to maintain a false peace; love does not dodge its responsibilities for fear of offending the lukewarm, or the Christ-rejector; neither does it remain silent when danger is near at hand, nor play at religious 'politics' to preserve its reputation – love *'rejoices in truth.'* It tells the truth, and lives by and in the truth, regardless of personal cost or consequence!

Love is Direct in the Context of Conflict

Thus we find the same John speaking with great plainness and with great affection. He will tell us, for example, without any fear of seeming to be 'judgemental', that so-called Christians who do not keep the commandments of God *'are liars and the truth is not in them.'* (I John 2:4). He will tell us that those who claim to walk in the light of this Gospel, and yet harbour hatred towards a brother or sister, are *'in darkness even until now.'* (I John 2:9). He will tell us *'if any man love the world of the love of the Father is not in him.'* (I John 2:15)

Love 'pulls no punches', is very practical, watches jealously over its charges. Love recognises that the body of Christ is engaged in the greatest conflict of all time; and there is therefore no time for playing games or making easy speeches. The history of Christ's true church is not marked out by compromises and religious spin doctors! It is marked out by men like Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Knox, and many others; men and women who could say *'My conscience is captive to the word of God. Here I stand: I can do no other. God help me.'* And, my dear friends, God did help them; and God's help will be with all who take their stand in love in this day!

Seeing Satan's Ultimate Goal

We are speaking then on identifying Antichrist; and we have to understand that no conflict is ever won without some knowledge of the enemy's intentions. This was ever the manner of Paul's warfare. In I Corinthians 9:26 he tells us *'So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.'* Paul did not simply hit out and hope for the best; Paul identified the target, and aimed for the bull's-eye!

Satan's ultimate goal is plainly shown to us in the passage we read in II Thessalonians. Here we see *'that man of sin...the son of perdition'* coming to the climax of his desire as he sits *'in the temple of God showing himself that he is God.'*

This intention is clearly indicated in Isaiah 14:13 and 14 where the prophet addresses the motives behind Satan's fall.

He says *'For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the North: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.'* This then is Satan's ultimate goal: he wants to be *'like the Most High.'*

Now Satan since his fall has always been worshipped as Satan. But this is not his ultimate desire; his ultimate desire is to be worshipped as God himself. To do this he must effectively impersonate the Lord Jesus Christ, moving aside the true Christ and establishing another Jesus, an alternative Jesus, an Antichrist.

This is not possible in a world of sin that knows not God; neither is it possible in the unspeakable depths of the occult world, where Satan is worshipped for who he truly is. Satan's goal can only be reached in the context of the Church of Jesus Christ - he desires to sit *'in the temple of God'* (the Church presently is that temple) *showing himself that he is God.'* And long before that moment of total deception described in II Thessalonians, the devil has been working to accomplish it in principle in every gathering that calls itself 'the Church' across the face of this earth! I think that ought to caution us as to where we give our allegiance on a Lord's Day morning, and what we open ourselves to on that TV set in the name of religion!

A Clear Sign

I want to give you a clear sign by which you can identify the move of the spirit of Antichrist right here and now and the present time.

I want to look again for a moment at I John 2:19. In the previous verse John has referred to many antichrists; many agencies and influences compelled by the spirit of Antichrist. Verse 19 begins: *'they went out from us, but they were not of us...'* The first sign of the moving of the spirit of Antichrist to accomplish his ultimate desire is a separation leading to polarisation. Notice, that move does not begin in the world. The world is being primed to accept Antichrist; but the initial move begins in the church – *'they went out from US.'*

John is saying, *they were among us*. They exhibited evidences of a new birth, they spoke of tongues, they carried a Bible, they attended church meetings, but in the process of time *'they went out from us'* because *'They were not of us.'* That spiritual polarisation began right there in the very heart of the first century Church; and after nearly 2000 years it is coming to its predicted climax.

The Cause of that Separation

I believe that the cause of that initial separation can be found in the confidence expressed in I John 4:6. Here John, 'the apostle of love', states and states emphatically, *'We are of God: he that knows God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.'*

The spiritual move that brings about separation and finally polarisation in the professing church of Jesus Christ, begins and continues with a turning away from hearing the Word of God: *'he that is not of God heareth is not us.'*

Remember Paul's solemn warning to Timothy in II Timothy 4:3+4: he says: *'for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... They shall turn away their ears from the truth...'* Paul is not speaking here of the world; the

pronoun 'they' refers to those who form a part of the church. 'They shall turn away their ears.' At that point the spirit of error is poised to take control, polarisation has begun; and in due course it is going to be said, 'they went out from us', they weren't willing to sit under sound doctrine, they would no longer hear us; they 'turned away the ears from the truth.'

These people still carry a Bible; they hadn't abandoned church life or their claims of Christ; they weren't cold or lacking in zeal, far from it! In fact the Scripture says they were insatiable: they heaped up for 'themselves teachers having itching ears.' They went overboard for meetings, conferences, books, CDs and seminars. The problem was, those 'teachers' were according to their own lusts, or desires. They weren't necessarily charlatans or false prophets (some evidently were) but they were teachers who would tickle the hearers' ears, clearly avoiding the issues of sin, holy living, and the true state of the church. Not everything they taught was untrue by any means; there was a deceptive mixture of truth and error, as well as many omissions from the full counsel of God. But undoubtedly the 'spirit of error' was in control, and the church emerging under such teaching was to be a part, not of the bride of Christ, but the bride of the Antichrist! Friend, as you read this message, thousands in our western world are being swept along the crest of this demonic wave whose motivating power is the spirit of Antichrist.

Identifying Antichrist: Some Pointers

I said earlier that the apostle Paul always located the target and aimed for the bull's-eye. Love rejoices in the truth, and cannot remain silent when danger is near at hand. With these things in mind, let me give you some clear pointers indicating the advancement of the spirit of Antichrist in present-day church circles. I am sure as you read them many individual cases will come to your mind.

1. The spirit of Antichrist turns ears away from God's truth. It accepts, and promotes things for which there is no authority in the Bible. Whether they be doctrines, revelations, experiences, testimonies, manifestations or supernatural happenings, the spirit of Antichrist accepts, defends and upholds them.
2. The spirit of Antichrist promotes pragmatism. If it is seen to 'work,' if it brings success, it brings people in, if it brings money in; then regardless of whether it can be supported by the Word of God, the spirit of Antichrist vigorously upholds it, claiming that it must be God. Many in the professing church worship the God of pragmatism.
3. The spirit of Antichrist uses carnal means to accomplish the work of God; it will even stoop to sinful methods if positive results are guaranteed. It argues that God's love for souls and his desire to save them at all costs makes Him willing to lay aside His purity, his Holiness, His righteousness, and even His truth to accomplish the task! However, Psalm 138:2 assures us that 'the Lord has magnified his word even above all his name.' The 'Name' in relation to the Almighty signifies his divine, immutable nature and character. For God to suspend His truth, His word, to get the job done, would be to bring a reproach upon His own name!
4. The spirit of Antichrist protects the reputations of false prophets; it protects its own. Liars, adulterers, compromisers and Christ-deniers may all find shelter

under the canopy of charitable enterprise and claims of previous track records. Incidentally, Judas Iscariot had an excellent track record before a covetous heart caused him to be dubbed the 'son of perdition' by the Lord Jesus himself! My wife and I sat dumbstruck as we watched one of the most prominent evangelists of the last half-century publicly deny that Jesus was the only way of salvation on a major television network in America. This is the work of the spirit of Antichrist.

Hope for the believer

Paul admonishes Timothy in II Tim 4: 2 to 'Preach the Word.' This is the place of hope and assurance in these troubled times, not just for the preacher, but for all Christians. 'Preach the word; the instant in season, out of season.' Say nothing, lay aside the Word of God, refuse to wield 'the sword of the spirit'; and the spirit of Antichrist will come in like a flood and swamp the vulnerable minds of the professing church that has been bullied into trying to believe everything that is put out in the name of Christianity.

A good friend of mine, who held a senior position in a teachers' training college, once passed the remark, regarding discipline in schools: what you choose to walk past (and say nothing by way of correction) will, in due course, become your standard. How sadly true that this is what happens in church circles of our day. Preachers and consequently Christians have neglected to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine (II Timothy 4:2) thus blatant sin in the church remains unchallenged, worldliness abounds, evangelism stoops to the level of pantomime in its methods, and the blessed name of the Lord Jesus Christ is inevitably blasphemed among the heathen!

I can assure you dear saints of God, as I close there will be people who are willing to stand up and be counted. Christ is not returning for a worn-out religious machine, or people holding between two opinions; he is coming back for a glorious church, a militant church (II Timothy 2:3); a church spotless and without blemish. May God equip us all to be a part of such a company in this late and urgent hour. Amen.

PATHWAY TO APOSTASY

By John Bunyan

These nine steps are taken from the famed Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan which show the steps of an individual who calls himself a Christian and who outwardly may seem to be so for a time, but who step by step departs from God unto eternal destruction.

1. They draw of their thoughts, all that they may, from the remembrance of God, death, and judgement to come.
2. Then they cast off by degrees private duties, as closet prayer, curbing their lusts, watching, sorrow for sin, and the like.
3. Then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians.
4. After that, they grow cold to public duty, as hearing, reading, godly conference, and the like.
5. Then they begin to pick holes, as we say, in the coats of some of the godly; and that devilishly, that they may have a

seeming colour to throw religion (for the sake of some infirmity they have espied in them) behind their backs.

6. Then they begin to adhere to, and associate themselves with, carnal, loose, and wanton men.

7. Then they give way to carnal and wanton discourses in secret; and glad are they if they can see such things in any that are counted honest, that they may the more boldly do it through their example.

8. After this, they begin to play with little sins openly.

9. And then, being hardened, they show themselves as they are. Thus, being launched again into the gulf of misery, unless a miracle of grace prevent it, they everlastingly perish in their own deceivings.

See how gradually, step by step, apostates go back. It begins in the unbelief of the heart, and ends in open sins in the life. Why is the love of this world so forbidden? Why is covetousness called idolatry? Because, whatever draws away the heart from God, and prevents enjoying close fellowship with Him, naturally tends to apostasy from Him.

Look well to your hearts and affections. *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”* Pr.4:23. If you neglect to watch, you will be sure to smart under the sense of sin on earth, or its curse in hell. *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* Eph 5:15-16

QUOTES ON APOSTASY

Various

“This would be the first step in apostasy; men first forget the true, and then adore the false.” *C.H. Spurgeon*

“The raw material for a devil is an angel. The raw material for the son of perdition was an apostle; and the raw material for the most horrible of apostates is one who is almost a saint.” *C.H. Spurgeon*

“He is not the God of apostates, for he hath said, If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” *C.H. Spurgeon*

“You must pick from among the apostles to find an apostate.” *C.H. Spurgeon*

“Beginners in the way of grace, it is a great and solemn truth that every child of God will hold on until the end, but it is an equally solemn truth that many who profess to be the Lord’s are self-deceivers, and will turn out apostates after all.” – *C.H. Spurgeon*

“THE APOSTACY, or falling away from the faith (II Thess. 2:3 and II Tim. 3:1-5). We see today false religions and an apostate church, robbing Christ of His divinity and the Bible of its authority. Higher criticism has denied the incarnation and resurrection of our Lord and a multitude of ministers are preaching for salary rather than for souls, and easing the conscience rather than bearing witness against sin. We know that faith and faithful teachers will be scarce at Jesus’ coming, for He says: ‘When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?’ The falling away must come first and then the

man of sin, Antichrist, shall be revealed.” —*William J Seymour*

“We have the original word *αποστασια* in our word apostasy; and by this term we understand a dereliction of the essential principles of religious truth - either a total abandonment of Christianity itself, or such a corruption of its doctrines as renders the whole system completely inefficient to salvation.” – *Adam Clarke*

“The apostle speaks of some very great apostasy, not only of some converted Jews or Gentiles, but such as should be very general, though gradual, and should give occasion to the revelation of rise of *antichrist*, that *man of sin*.” – *Matthew Henry*

“The purity or apostasy of a church greatly depends on its ministers, leaders, teachers and preachers, just as the church in the Old Testament depended for its purity on the faithfulness of its priests.” (Mal.2:1-9). – *John Owen*

“Only the revival of a powerful evangelical ministry will draw the church back from its present apostasy into that glorious state which will truly bring glory to God.” – *John Owen*

“We do not know how far this apostasy will spread and to what heights it will reach. God can put a stop to it at any moment. But, provoked by the ingratitude of a wicked world, no one of us knows how long God will withhold the powerful influences of His Spirit.” – *John Owen*

“Love of the world, prosperity and ease, along with the cares and anxieties of life, cause many Christians to neglect these warnings and so they are in danger of falling away in times of great apostasy.” – *John Owen*

“God has appointed a time when he will put a stop to all apostasy and ‘the Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea’ (Hab.2:14).” – *John Owen*

“All backslidings, if we are not careful, can lead to this state of irrecoverable apostasy. Therefore, we must take heed that we do not ride with the hounds of any one sin, nor embrace one sinful lust.” – *John Owen*

“This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” – *The Apostle Paul* (II Tim.1:15)

“But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” – *The Apostle Peter* II (Pet.2:22)

“The church has lost her testimony. She has no longer anything to say to the world. Her once robust shout of assurance has faded away to an apologetic whisper. She who one time went out to declare now goes out to inquire. Her dogmatic declaration has become a respectful suggestion, a word of religious advice, given with the understanding that it is after all only an opinion and not meant to sound bigoted. Pure Christianity, instead of being shaped by its culture, actually stands in sharp opposition to it.” – *A.W. Tozer*