

A full-page background image showing a person in a red jacket standing in a grassy field with arms raised, facing a mountain range under a cloudy sky with a rainbow. The person is in the lower center of the frame. The mountains are green and rolling. The sky is grey with a bright rainbow arching across the top.

# Gospel Order

AN INTRODUCTION

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# Introduction

## Initial Reactions

**G**OSPEL order was originally preached in the 1989 series of camp meetings, and it continued to be taught through *The Messenger* in the years following. Those of us who heard this message back then and who still love it today, will surely be able to confirm this. On those occasions, the changes of heart and sincere confessions wrought by the Holy Spirit, resulted in a level of unity which we had never experienced before that time.

Some who had acted contrary to the new light without realizing it, were happy to accept the warning and were completely restored. Others left us forever. Both reactions were a blessing to the Church, although no one rejoiced over the loss caused by those who left us.

Some were so inspired by the message, that they gave grateful testimonies of the blessing received, wrote and sang songs about Gospel Order, or added verses to well known songs which expressed their love for this message. There really was a wonderful harmony.

1989 was a year of triumph over the powers of darkness for God's people, and it seemed obvious that we could expect a reaction to follow. As Luther's ninety-nine theses awoke angry reactions from Tetzel and others, so the first presentation of Gospel Order called forth a determined resistance. The first wave of opposition was led by those who were not in harmony with this message anyway, and only served to make manifest their true position.

## Another Crisis

But, a few years later in 1993, the next crisis broke unexpectedly over our heads. Some who had originally accepted the message suddenly made a public rejection of the same as

error and condemned it as a deviation from the truth. But it soon became obvious to every spiritually minded person that this crisis did not bear the signs of a true reformation.

However, it did attract our attention to an important part of the message on Gospel Order. Since truth can afford to be tested, the Church can only profit from such investigations. Truth is constantly growing in the minds of God's children. Therefore, when a new message is presented, it disposes of some wrong ideas but not all. This combination of further wrong ideas and newness of the message leaves us with some misunderstandings and imbalances in the first stages.

But, shall we stop preaching the message because of this? Certainly not! Truth must be preached, even if, for the time being, our understanding of it is incomplete. When God initially delivers His truth, He unfolds to us the basic principles upon which the light is established.

## **False Charges**

So, what is the principle of Gospel Order which was not seen until it was preached?

- Is it, as our enemies maintain, that we are to be dependent on one person, so that we may not think for ourselves?
- Is it that we can no longer test a new teaching without being prejudiced?
- Is Gospel Order an appeal to return to the papacy, where one person defines what truth is?
- Is it the exaltation of a humble messenger to the office of magistrate, to determine what each individual is to do and not to do?

If this had been the underlying principle of Gospel Order which I preached at every camp in 1989, then it would not have led to the revival it did at those meetings. What do our opponents imagine? That I, a man of rather shy disposition



who has never learned the art of preaching, have bewitched whole congregations by pure eloquence? No, this blessing came from God and not from man, and God's working leads us to Him, not to men.

## **The Principle of Gospel Order**

Let us briefly delineate just what the principle of Gospel Order is: Christ is the Head of the Church. He leads the Church in doctrine and in life according to a certain order which He Himself has instituted. This is the heart of all the principles which have been presented in connection with Gospel Order.

In Gospel Order, the members of the Church are closely connected with one another, and yet independent. However, each individual's dependence on that which God has revealed is critically important. In this matter the Bible fills a special role, for

### **2 Peter 1**

<sup>21</sup> ...prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

We concur with present truth because it is in harmony with the word of God. In fact, present truth is judged by the word. The Bereans...

### **Acts 17**

<sup>11</sup> ...searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

This principle seems to be self-evident, and every faithful Christian should be able to accept it. But before we complacently turn from this verse, with the idea that we already understand its meaning, let us take a closer look at it in the light of what God has revealed to us.

## **His Word or Our Word?**

Dependence on the word means much more than recognizing the Bible as the rule for every doctrine. It also means that

we shall not declare any of our own, independent thoughts as truth.

It is a fact that men make their own thoughts, independently of what God has revealed, and then spread these thoughts as “truth”. However, the human will has never produced real prophecy, but rather a multitude of teachings which all include more or less error, and are the cause of the many divisions throughout Christendom. Indeed, these divisions are increasing daily as more and more new teachings are produced by human efforts.

What can we do about this? Those of us who know something of God’s character should also know that this unfortunate situation cannot be corrected by using force, nor by deception. The use of force and deception are the tools of the adversary. God and his followers have nothing to hide. Instead, it is through enlightenment that they seek to win people to God’s side.

## **How the Lord has Worked**

If we take a close look at the history of our movement, we will notice that the Lord has always worked according to a certain pattern. He has revealed everything that was the main stream of present truth through one channel.

In our movement there have also been people who have tried, with whatever motives they might have had, to bring about messages by the application of the human will. Not a single reformatory movement has escaped such efforts in the past. But so far in our Church, not one of these human messages has taken root, and neither will they in the future so long as we hold fast to what God has revealed to us in His way.

The fact that the Lord always used the same channel to reveal the basic messages was bound to awaken the jealousy of those who dreamed of holding such an “honorable” office

themselves. This office, however, is not as honorable as they imagine, for the messenger has no authority over the people. He is simply a channel from which no more is expected than to faithfully pass on what he has received.

At this stage we do not want to investigate the reasons why the Lord has only used one channel for this work. We do want to stress though, that should the Lord decide to use another channel, we are ready to accept him. And we already know that He will do this when the loud cry is proclaimed. When this happens, the Church will recognize the light. Every sincere person will then be enlightened, and the light will lead to a true reformation. The extent of this work will be much greater than the confines of our work today.

When this time comes, the Lord will reveal it to His people. But we cannot accept any message which individuals produce by their own efforts in anticipation of this event. That would be the end of God's working through our movement. Instead of searching for new light, let us diligently study the light that God has given us in His way. The Lord Himself will take care of everything else.

Everyone who loves the message today can see that it has not made us dependent on a man but on the revealed word of God. It doesn't matter which person the Lord uses as the messenger, though He usually uses the simple and lowly—a concept which the world despises. While the tool itself is not the treasure, we do not despise the instrument, but honor the Lord by gladly accepting the word which comes through it.

### **Acts 17**

<sup>11</sup> They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

So let us be grateful that through His light on Gospel Order the Lord is establishing us more firmly on His word, and delivering us from human words.



# 1. The Importance of Gospel Order

## Unity is the Goal

**B**EFORE leaving His disciples on this earth, Jesus gave them some extremely important instructions which are recorded in *John* 13-16. His closing prayer is recorded in chapter 17, where He summarizes all the points that were of special significance to Him. Jesus deliberately prayed loudly so that His disciples would hear Him. It is only natural that He should want them to know what He would be doing for them when He was no longer visibly with them.

God had also given His people an insight into the work of the heavenly priesthood during the times of the Old Testament. Through the prophet Zechariah, Christ was revealed as the Angel of the Lord who stood before God and mediated for Joshua, the high priest who represented the people of God. Jesus is the divine High Priest, the true Mediator between God and His creatures. He is the One who prays for His people with the power of His own blood.

The prayer in *John* 17 is a high priest's prayer. It is not limited to any time, but is as valid for us today as it was for the disciples back then.

### **John 17**

<sup>20</sup> I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

Jesus prayed these words about two thousand years ago, and He is still praying them to the Father today. In the words that He spoke to His disciples, He made plain the work that He is continually doing for man.

### **Hebrews 8**

<sup>1</sup> Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

What is the main burden of Jesus' prayer?

### **John 17**

<sup>20</sup> I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word;

<sup>21</sup> That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me.

<sup>22</sup> And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

<sup>23</sup> I in them, and You in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved me.

The request that His children shall be perfectly united is repeated three times in these verses. Christ also stresses that this unity is not to be self-serving but is intended to serve a particular goal—the world should see that Jesus has been sent by the Father, and that the Father loves the church as He loves His own Son. The thought that Jesus would be glorified by this is expressed in the first words of His prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

<sup>2</sup> As You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

<sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

This prayer was answered in a remarkable way during the lives of the apostles. Note carefully the exact order of the events. After the ascension of Christ it is reported that

### **Acts 1**

<sup>14</sup> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Then the election of the twelfth apostle is mentioned, followed by the notable event of the outpouring of the Holy

Spirit:

**Acts 2**

<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

<sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

<sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The main thought is obvious—first of all the disciples were all with one accord in one place. In other words, they were perfectly united, as Jesus had prayed for. The jealousy that had ruled them when they unsuccessfully tried to heal the epileptic boy, their desire for the highest position, which was also manifested in their unwillingness to wash one another's feet—all this was gone.

**The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:**

Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship.

And so the Son was glorified, as He had prayed for, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

**The Acts of the Apostles, p. 38:**

Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity.

In the order of these events we can see the direct connection between the unity in the church and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

A special outpouring of the Holy Spirit has also been prophesied for the last days, when the work is to be finished. The events of Pentecost, which are also known as the early rain, are to be repeated in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain.

## **Joel 2**

<sup>23</sup> Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he has given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

This means that there will be a special work of unification within the church of Christ in the last days. We must strive to reach this unification by faith, knowing that it is the goal that God has promised us.

## **Unity Achieved Through Order**

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples at Pentecost, many people joined the church.

### **Acts 2**

<sup>41</sup> Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

These people came from many different nations:

<sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

<sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs.

Despite all the differences between these groups, the record says,

### **Acts 4**

<sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

However, this unity was soon broken. The enemy of souls was successful in reviving old prejudices.



## **Acts 6**

<sup>1</sup> Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

This strife was soon settled, but afterwards the unity in the church was broken up again and again. Paul mentions this in his first letter to the Corinthians.

## **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>10</sup> Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

<sup>11</sup> For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

<sup>12</sup> Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ.

<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Since unity is a condition for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it is not surprising that the gifts of the Spirit in the apostolic church began to wane in the same measure as the unity decreased.

What did the Lord do to restore and maintain unity in the church? The answer to this question is extremely important because we, as disciples of Jesus, need the same unity among us today so that we can receive the Holy Spirit as well. We need to know the ways and the works of God which lead to unity.

The answer to this problem is not difficult to find—the Lord gave His people Gospel Order. Let us go back to the first example that we mentioned—the strife concerning the daily distribution among the widows. After the report of this strife the record goes on to say,

## **Acts 6**

<sup>2</sup> Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

<sup>4</sup> But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

<sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

<sup>6</sup> Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

### **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 88:**

The apostles must now take an important step in the perfecting of Gospel Order in the church by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves.

The second example of the strife in the Corinthian church shows even more clearly that Gospel Order is the answer to the problem of disunity, as a careful study of the first letter to the Corinthians reveals.

After reminding the Corinthians that he is their spiritual father, Paul showed them their duty to disfellowship an unruly member according to the rules of order in the church (see chapter 5). Then in chapter 6 Paul goes on to explain the way of order in dealing with legal matters between Christians. Various exhortations follow this, but they are all connected with Gospel Order. He expresses himself most clearly on the subject of Gospel Order in the following words:

### **1 Corinthians 12**

<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

<sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

<sup>12</sup> For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

<sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

<sup>28</sup> And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

<sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

But Paul does not stop here. After describing the foundation of Gospel Order—love—he goes on to show another important aspect of this order. In the question concerning what was more important, speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance, or order, Paul makes it quite clear that order must take the first place.

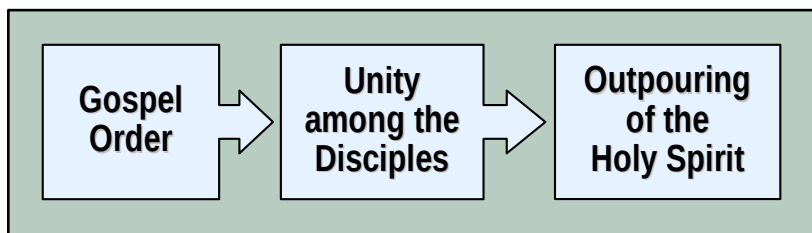
### **1 Corinthians 14**

<sup>32</sup> And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

<sup>33</sup> For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

#### **Early Writings, p. 97:**

And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before.



The connection between cause and effect is apparent. Order

is the cause of unity, and unity is the condition that has to be reached so that the latter rain can be poured out. But let us make this connection even clearer by turning to another cause which the Holy Scriptures identify as necessary for unity in the church. Jesus prayed,

### **John 17**

<sup>23</sup> I in them, and You in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved me.

In speaking these words Jesus expressed the truth that unity in the church would be perfect when He was in the believers as the Father was in Him. This is exactly what Paul describes as the mystery of God,

### **Colossians 1**

<sup>26</sup> ...which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

<sup>27</sup> To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

What does “Christ in the believer” mean? Nothing less than what Jesus meant when He said that God was in Him. Jesus prayed “I in them, and You in me.” The nature and character of God is in His Son, just as the nature and character of Christ are in the believing disciple.

How does Christ’s nature and character come to be in the believer? Christ was born as a Son. He had the nature of His Father from His conception. In the same way, the disciple possesses the nature of Christ from the moment of his rebirth experience. Then his character is changed more and more by the process of reformation, during the course of his entire life, into the image of his Father.

”Christ in you” is a process that begins with the rebirth experience, and then continues in the sanctification of the individual, which is the work of a lifetime.

Both phases of this work have the same goal—that Christ will become one with His disciples in a particular way. Just as He and the Father are One, He wants to be one with His disciples:

**John 17**

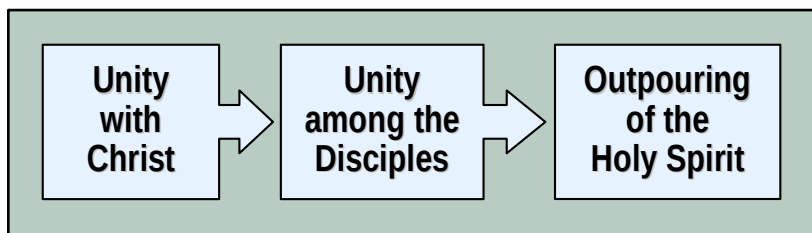
<sup>21</sup> ...as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.

This is the condition on which there will be unity among the disciples, as it is written, “that they all may be one.”

**The Desire of Ages, p. 296:**

Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.

While we have just seen that order is a condition for unity in the church, we now see that the unity between the individual believer and Christ is the cause of unity between believers.



Do these two prerequisites contradict each other? When the word of God specifies both our individual unity with Christ as well as Gospel Order as the cause of unity among His disciples, then they both have their rightful places and it would be senseless to deny the one or the other. Either there is more than one reason for unity, and they are of equal value, or both of the reasons mentioned are so fully in harmony that we can actually speak of just one cause.

When we have gained a right understanding of Gospel Order we soon see that we are not dealing with a dry, dead sub-

ject, but with the practical application of the gospel. The purpose of the gospel is to restore the image of God in us, as it is written,

### **Romans 1**

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

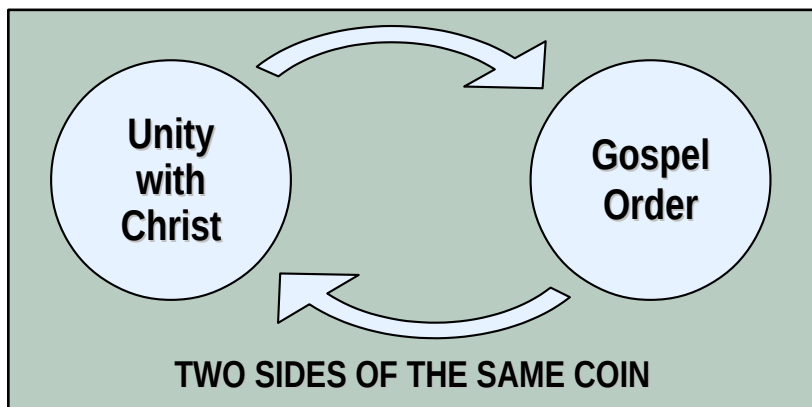
### **2 Corinthians 4**

<sup>6</sup> For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

### **2 Corinthians 5**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The gospel is the agency which leads us to unity with Christ. Therefore we see that Gospel Order and union with Christ can be described as two sides of a coin that restores the image of God in humanity.



### **The Meaning of the Latter Rain**

The latter rain will be poured out when Gospel Order, and therefore unity among Jesus' disciples, is restored. God is a God of order:

## **1 Corinthians 14**

<sup>33</sup> For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Therefore He cannot give the blessing of the full power of the Holy Spirit to anybody who is outside of Gospel Order, and consequently is in disharmony with His church.

Why is it that we desire the power of the Holy Spirit? Simon Magus, Judas, and many others desired it because they were seeking for a power that would enable them to establish their own ways and goals. They had less interest in the character of God than in their own honor and glory.

But the purpose of God in giving the gift of the Holy Spirit is exactly the opposite of such aims. Jesus explained this in the following words:

### **John 16**

<sup>13</sup> However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide 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.

<sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for He will take of what is mine and declare it to you.

The Holy Spirit is given to glorify Jesus. When we read the word “glorify” we usually connect it with a particular concept. We tend to think of radiance and majesty. And indeed, this is the meaning that the Bible gives the word in certain instances. But it also has another, more important, meaning. At one time Moses asked to see the glory of God:

### **Exodus 33**

<sup>18</sup> And he said, I beseech You, show me your glory.

His petition was granted, but in a completely different way from what we would expect.

<sup>19</sup> Then He said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be

gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

The glory of God is His compassion and grace, or in short, His character. Glorification then, means the revealing of character. And so the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter rain power becomes clear—it is to reveal the character of God. How will the latter rain reveal the character of God? Jesus said,

### **John 15**

<sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples.

The fruit that the Lord is waiting to see, is the reproduction of His character in His disciples.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 67:**

The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others.

The work will obviously be accelerated by the latter rain, and that is why we should desire and pray for this blessing.

## **The Glorification of Christ**

Jesus will be glorified by the revelation of His character in His disciples. It is necessary for His character to be manifested in human beings because Christ Himself is carrying out His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. But His and the Father's character is to be seen on earth as well as in heaven

The character of God is one of order and harmony. Therefore, the result of His government is also order and harmony. In heaven there is perfect order and perfect harmony between everyone. This is an expression of true love.

Words fail to express the beauty of this order and harmony, but we need an insight into this beauty so that sin on this earth can be brought to an end. Such an insight is given through the living experience of Christ's disciples. It is this

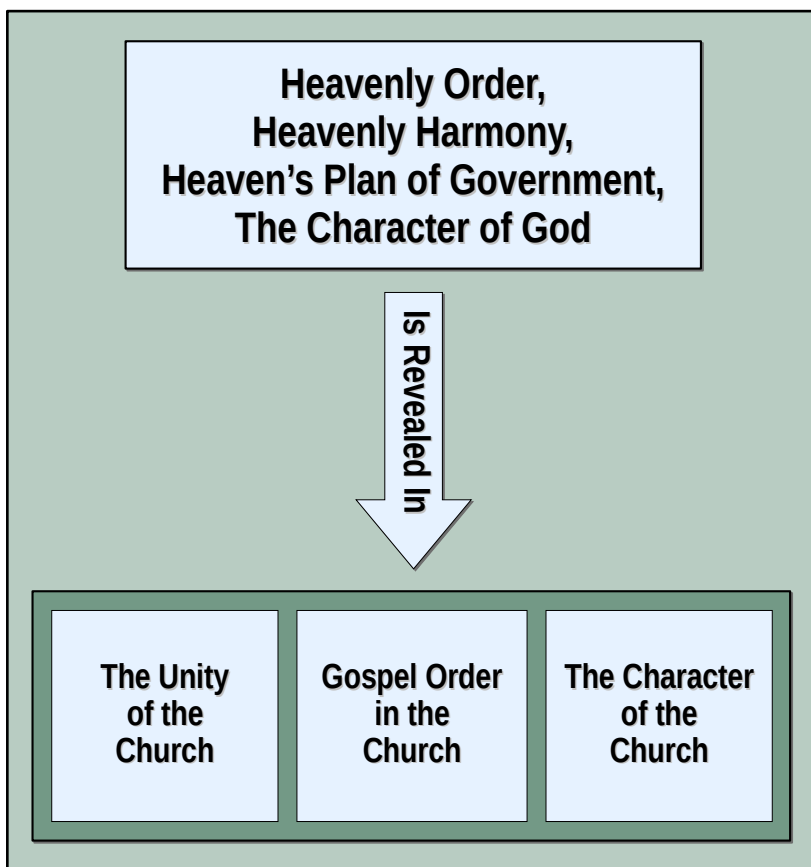


experience of Gospel Order which will glorify the Saviour.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 680:**

Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth. Thus in His people He is glorified....

The church, endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the riches of His mercy, His grace, and His love, are to appear in full and final display. Christ looks upon His people in their purity and perfection, as the reward of His humiliation, and the supplement of His glory, —Christ, the great Center, from whom radiates all glory.





## 2. What is Gospel Order?

**G**OSPEL order is the order in the gospel. The biblical concept of Gospel Order comes from the terms “gospel” and “order.” The question is, therefore, what is the biblical meaning of the words “gospel” and “order”?

### The Gospel

The title of the first four books of the New Testament begin with “The gospel according to...” followed by the name of the author: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. These titles were not given by the writers themselves but were added later by those who translated the Bible. They are intended to show that the contents of the respective books deal with the message of salvation that was given to the world through the life and teachings of Jesus.

The books themselves describe how Jesus preached the gospel.

#### **Matthew 4**

<sup>23</sup> And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

#### **Matthew 9**

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

In some Bible translations other words are used in the place of gospel, such as “good news.” In some languages the word “gospel” cannot be directly translated and so the meaning of the word is rendered by a phrase. For example, “the news that makes one happy,” “the information that causes one joy,” “words that bring smiles,” or “message that causes the heart to be sweet.”

However, most translations fall short of the mark because false concepts are often interwoven with the phrases used. For example, people understand the term “good news” as something they would like to hear, something that will be pleasant to them.

**Isaiah 30** [New Century Version]

<sup>10</sup> They tell the seers, Don't see any more visions! They say to the prophets, Don't tell us the truth! Say things that will make us feel good; see only good things for us.

News is deemed “good,” or a message creates joy, when it is pleasing, when it satisfies “itching ears.” 2 *Timothy* 4:3. But this is not the kind of news we need to hear in order to save us from our sinful condition. And that is just what the gospel is—the message of salvation from sin, the message that brings healing.

The word of God gives its own definition of the gospel. For example in *Romans* 1:16 we read,

**Romans 1**

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

The gospel is not merely news, or information, it is the actual power of God. This thought is confirmed in:

**1 Thessalonians 1**

<sup>5</sup> For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.

There is a tremendous difference between a message which only makes people feel good, and the power of God. The former is a sure path to destruction, but the latter is the path of life.

We can only really appreciate the extent of the power of the gospel when we consider the effect of it. The power of God is not just any power. It is the same creative power that brought

this world into existence, and that maintains it moment by moment.

**Hebrews 1 [NRSV]**

<sup>3</sup> He sustains all things by his powerful word.

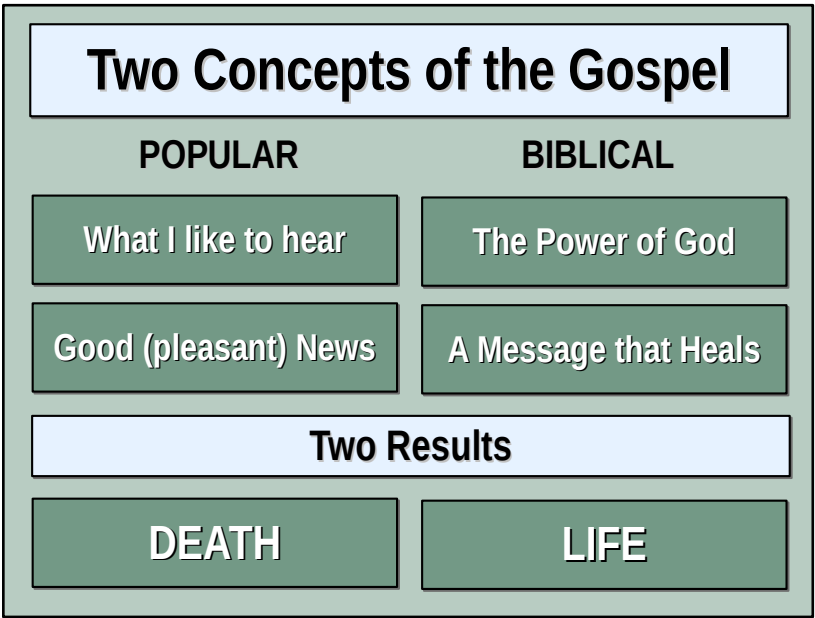
At best, we humans can grasp only in theory the kind of power that is necessary to create the entire universe and keep it running. In fact, even the creation of our little world is beyond our comprehension.

**Jeremiah 10**

<sup>12</sup> He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.

**Jeremiah 27**

<sup>5</sup> I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to me.



According to the definition given in *Romans* 1:16 that the

gospel “is the power of God to salvation” these texts could also be read in the following way:

“He has made the earth by His gospel...”

“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by my gospel.”

God has also given us additional information to help us understand how He created this world.

### **Psalms 33**

<sup>6</sup> By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

<sup>9</sup> For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word...

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

So then, the power of God, the gospel, is His word—the same word through which the world was created. This knowledge leads us to a new and better understanding of the record of creation in *Genesis*. Light was created through the gospel.

### **Genesis 1**

<sup>3</sup> Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

It was also through the gospel that the firmament between the waters was created.

<sup>6</sup> Then God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

Through the gospel, the seas and the dry land were made.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.

The plant world was made through the gospel.

<sup>11</sup> Then God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth; and it was so.

Then the stars were made through the gospel.

### **Genesis 1**

<sup>14</sup> Then God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.

God created the fish in the sea and the birds in the air through the gospel.

<sup>20</sup> Then God said, Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.

It was through the gospel that the animals on the land were made.

<sup>24</sup> Then God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind; and it was so.

It was also through the gospel that man was made.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

The first angel's message in *Revelation* 14 also clearly portrays the close connection between the gospel and creation:

### **Revelation 14**

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach...

<sup>7</sup> ...and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

This is the same gospel that the Lord Jesus preached when He was on this earth. The results of His preaching clearly demonstrate that the gospel is indeed a power that creates life:

### **Matthew 4**

<sup>23</sup> And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

### **Matthew 9**

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

The preaching of the gospel was not merely accompanied by healing from sickness, but diseases were directly healed through the power of the gospel. This becomes even more evident when the healings of Christ are studied in more detail. As in the creation of this world, Jesus spoke the word, and the result was healing.

### **Matthew 8**

<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, I am willing; be cleansed. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you. And his servant was healed that same hour.

<sup>31</sup> So the demons begged Him, saying, If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.

<sup>32</sup> And He said to them, Go. So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine.

### **Matthew 12**

<sup>13</sup> Then He said to the man, Stretch out your hand. And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 390:**

The life of Christ that gives life to the world is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power.

The power of the gospel was most clearly revealed when Jesus raised the dead. In the resurrection of Lazarus we see ex-



actly the same procedure as at creation.

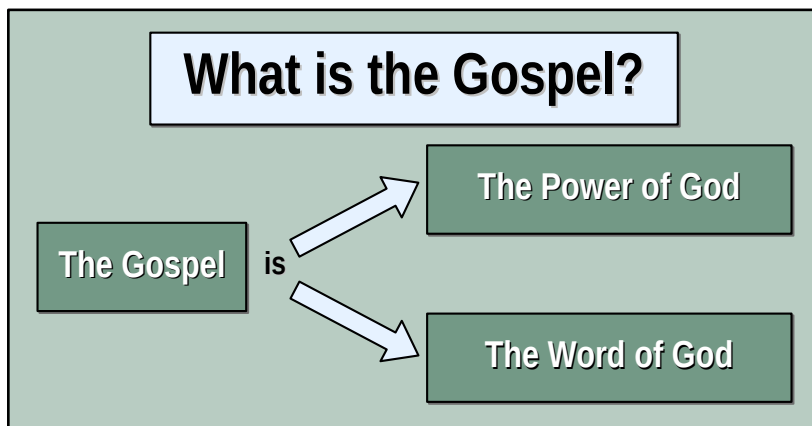
### **John 11**

<sup>43</sup> Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!

<sup>44</sup> And he who had died came out.

### **Psalm 33**

<sup>9</sup> For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.



And Jesus Himself, the firstfruits of the dead (*1 Corinthians* 15:20), was also raised through the power of the gospel.

### **2 Timothy 2**

<sup>8</sup> Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.

But it was not Jesus' main purpose to heal people from their physical diseases. This work was only intended to illustrate the greater work of deliverance from the sickness of sin.

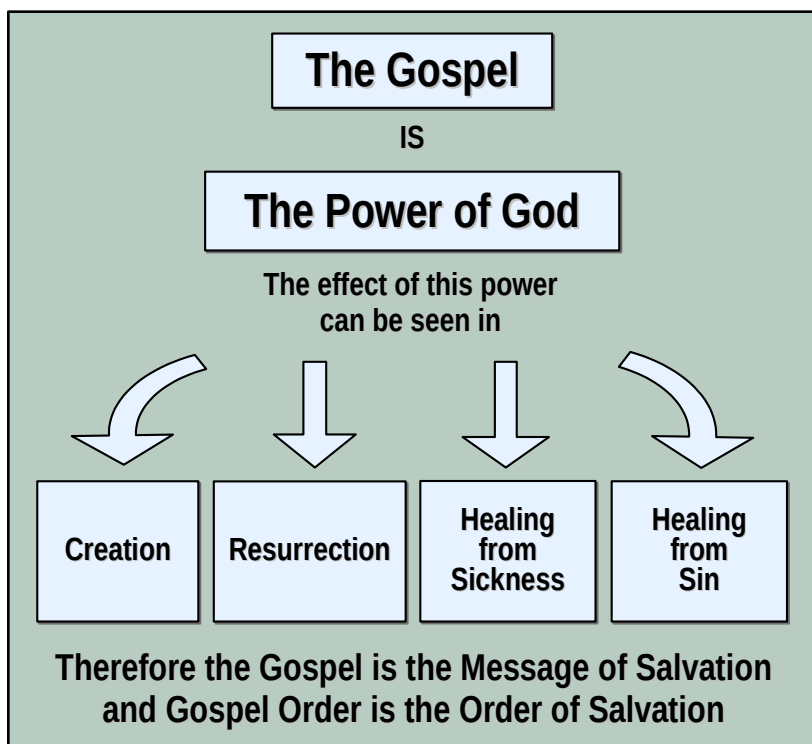
### **Matthew 9**

<sup>2</sup> Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.

<sup>6</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins—then He said to the paralytic, Arise,

take up your bed, and go to your house.

<sup>7</sup> And he arose and departed to his house.



The gospel which created the world, which maintains the universe day by day, and which heals the sick, is the same means by which sins are forgiven. The gospel is indeed “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

### **1 Corinthians 15**

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

<sup>2</sup> By which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you.

### **1 Thessalonians 1**

<sup>5</sup> For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.

So it was, and so it is today. The sign of the gospel is the power that attends it, and this is revealed in the healing of physical and spiritual sickness. We should expect nothing less than this from Gospel Order.

## The Beauty of Order

Many people are terrified when they hear the word “order.” They are afraid that it will mean the loss of their freedom and the introduction of a system of oppression. But this is by no means the biblical definition of order.

The Bible refers to the stars that the Lord created on the fourth day as ordinances.<sup>1</sup>

### Jeremiah 31

<sup>35</sup> Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night...

<sup>36</sup> If those ordinances depart from before me...

### Job 38

<sup>33</sup> Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?

The precise orbits of the stars, which can be exactly calculated for hundreds of years in the past as well as in the future, are a good example of what the Lord means when He speaks of order.

The Greeks were so impressed with the preciseness of this order that they gave the name *cosmos* (which originally meant “order”) to the starry heavens. The Greek verb *kosmeo*, which is translated as “to adorn,” is derived from this word and means “to bring into order.” This explains why *cosmos* is often translated as “adornment” in the Bible.

In describing the “order” of a woman, Peter says,

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<sup>1</sup> The word *ordinance* comes from the Latin *ordinare* which means “to set in order.” This definition concurs with the original Hebrew text.

### 1 Peter 3

<sup>3</sup> Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—

<sup>4</sup> Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

<sup>5</sup> For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

<sup>6</sup> As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

Using the word “order” instead of “adornment”, the same text could be read in the following way.

“Do not let your order be merely outward...rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible order of a gentle and quiet spirit.”

Peter describes the gentle and quiet spirit as a power that can win others:

### 1 Peter 3

<sup>1</sup> ...that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.

What is the secret of this power? Obviously it lies in the order of the submission<sup>2</sup> of a wife to her husband. Just as the Lord God has given every planet its exact orbit, so He has given the husband and wife a certain position in His order. Concerning this Paul writes,

### Ephesians 5

<sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word for submission is *hypotasso* and is made up of two words: *hypo*, which means “under,” and *tasso*, which means to bring in order. Therefore, it may correctly be rendered as “to come into order.”

Both Peter and Paul speak of Gospel Order in the family. In this context “submission” simply means to come into line with Gospel Order.

In the Old Testament the word “ordinance” (meaning “to set in order”) usually refers to the law. The most well-known example of this is in *Psalms* 119. In this psalm the word “ordinance” is consistently spoken of as being equal to the law of God, His commandments, His warnings, His word, and His truth. The “ordinances” here spoken of refer to the eternal law of God as recorded in *Exodus* 20, and which Jesus repeated in the Sermon on the Mount:

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>17</sup> Do not think that I came to destroy the Law [the ordinances] or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

<sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law [the ordinances] till all is fulfilled.

<sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments [ordinances], and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus taught the gospel, and in His life and teachings He showed that He kept the eternal ordinances, as described in *Psalms* 119. That is Gospel Order in practice. In the light of this truth “order” and “gospel” (“Gospel Order”) gain a new and interesting meaning.

## **Gospel Order in Psalm 119**

Both *Psalms* 119 and the Sermon on the Mount show that Gospel Order is not something that God’s people are afraid of. In fact, quite the opposite is true—Gospel Order calls forth deep thankfulness and brings the believers into closer fellowship with their Lord.

**Psalms 119 [NRSV]**

<sup>6</sup> Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

<sup>7</sup> I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous ordinances.

<sup>8</sup> I will observe your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

God's true people long to gain a deeper understanding of Gospel Order.

**Psalms 119 [NRSV]**

<sup>18</sup> Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

<sup>19</sup> I live as an alien in the land; do not hide your commandments from me.

<sup>20</sup> My soul is consumed with longing for your ordinances at all times.

The true child of God delights in Gospel Order.

<sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

<sup>35</sup> Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

<sup>36</sup> Turn my heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain.

<sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; give me life in your ways.

<sup>38</sup> Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who fear you.

<sup>39</sup> Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good.

The hopes of the child of God rest in Gospel Order.

<sup>43</sup> Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your ordinances.

<sup>44</sup> I will keep your law continually, forever and ever.

God's children find comfort in Gospel Order.

<sup>52</sup> When I think of your ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O Lord.

<sup>53</sup> Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, those

who forsake your law.

<sup>54</sup> Your statutes have been my songs wherever I make my home.

The thoughts of the believer are continually filled with Gospel Order.

**Psalm 119 [NRSV]**

<sup>61</sup> Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.

<sup>62</sup> At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous ordinances.

The earth has been established through Gospel Order.

<sup>89</sup> Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.

<sup>90</sup> Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.

<sup>91</sup> They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants.

<sup>92</sup> Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.

If we are taught by God, we will not stray from Gospel Order. We will love it with all our heart and think about it daily. Gospel Order makes us wise.

<sup>97</sup> Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.

<sup>98</sup> Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me.

<sup>99</sup> I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your decrees are my meditation.

<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

<sup>101</sup> I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

<sup>102</sup> I do not turn away from your ordinances, for you have taught me.

Gospel Order gives life. Those who love it, long to be taught more about it.

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

<sup>106</sup> I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

<sup>107</sup> I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

<sup>108</sup> Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your ordinances.

<sup>109</sup> I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.

Gospel Order is an eternal ordinance. It rescues and redeems those who love it and do not forget it.

### **Psalms 119 [NRSV]**

<sup>153</sup> Look on my misery and rescue me, for I do not forget your law.

<sup>154</sup> Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise.

<sup>159</sup> Consider how I love your precepts; preserve my life according to your steadfast love.

<sup>160</sup> The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.

Gospel Order is a cause of praise among the people of God. It brings great peace to the believer.

<sup>164</sup> Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous ordinances.

<sup>165</sup> Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

## **The Sermon on the Mount**

Gospel Order is also taught in the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in *Matthew*, chapters 5-7. After explaining that His words were directed to the spiritually poor, etc., Jesus went on to speak of the work of His disciples who were to be the salt and the light of the world. After this He spent the longest and most important part of His speech explaining Gospel Order:

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>17</sup> Do not think that I came to destroy the Law [Gospel Order] or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.



<sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law [Gospel Order] till all is fulfilled.

<sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments [Gospel Order], and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

After this introduction, Jesus began to speak about killing, adultery, swearing, revenge, and finally about loving our enemies. The main point of His sermon is expressed in the following words:

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>45</sup> ...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

<sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

These words contain a deep meaning, and have far-reaching consequences. Here, God Himself is revealed as an unfailing Pattern of complete harmony with His law. This leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the law—Gospel Order—is nothing other than an expression of God's character.

## **The Law and the Word**

Many people imagine that God has given us laws that He Himself does not need to keep, and that He does not in fact keep them. But this is a wrong conception.

As the Lawgiver and Creator, God does indeed stand above His law, but this is not to say that He does not keep it. Jesus' statement that we are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, proves that God keeps His own law, for the Father could never be a pattern of law-keeping if He did not keep it Himself.

God does in fact keep the law. Not because He must, but be-

cause He Himself is the Origin of the law. It is completely natural for Him to keep the law because the law is an expression of His never-changing character, as it is written:

### **James 1**

<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

### **Ephesians 3**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

<sup>15</sup> From whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

<sup>16</sup> That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man;

<sup>17</sup> ...that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

### **John 3**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

These statements are but three from a list of countless texts which describe God's character. They all testify to a never-changing character which is in harmony with the law in every particular. This fact is clearly stated in the expression,

### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> ...and the Word was God.

According to *Psalms* 119 the word of God is the same as the law of God. In other words, the text from John could also be read,

“...and the law was God.”

This means that God is not merely the Lawgiver, but that He identifies Himself with the law. He Himself is the origin and the fulfillment of the law.

The first chapter of the book of *John* is a deep study into the law of God. The principles presented there show that the word, or the law of God (which is Gospel Order), is not just a written code of ethics, but that it finds its truest expression in the Person of Jesus Christ.

### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

<sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>16</sup> And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

If we were to insert the phrase “Gospel Order” in place of “Word” the meaning of the above text in the context of this theme becomes even more apparent.

“In the beginning was Gospel Order, and Gospel Order was with God, and Gospel Order was God. It was in the beginning with God. All things were made through it, and without it nothing was made that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men.”

The first chapter of *John* is the record of creation in the New Testament. It is a continuation of the revelation that was given in the Old Testament. The first record of creation begins with the words,

### **Genesis 1**

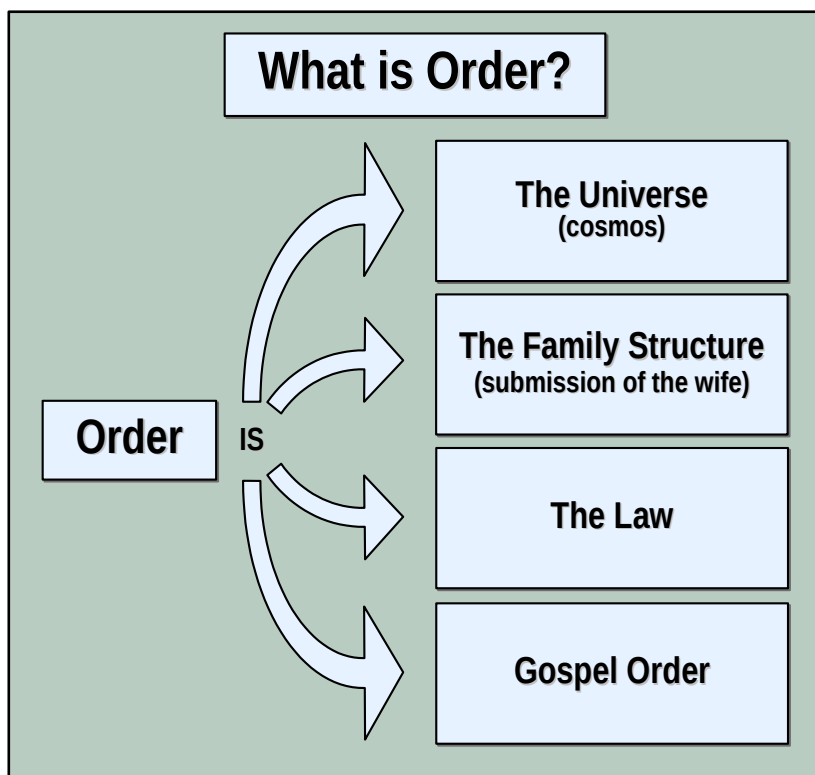
<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

<sup>2</sup> The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over

the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup> Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

Before creation, the world was without form and void. The original Hebrew words indicate a condition of chaos. Creation, which was achieved through the gospel, brought the matter of this world from a disorderly state into an orderly condition. That is Gospel Order. The gospel creates order. Nothing that is made, is made without Gospel Order. In other words, only the gospel can create order.



To continue with the first chapter of *John*—again substituting “Gospel Order” for “Word”—we read:

“And Gospel Order became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld its glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Gospel Order is manifested in the life of Jesus, and therefore the character of God the Father. Jesus Himself said,

**John 14**

<sup>9</sup> He who has seen me has seen the Father;

**John 17**

<sup>4</sup> I have glorified You on the earth...

<sup>6</sup> I have manifested Your name...

Jesus is the Son of God—He has the same characteristics as His Father.

**John 1**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

## **The Law, the Word, and the Cross**

The climax of Jesus' life on this earth was His death on the cross. The character of the Father was most clearly revealed through His Son at this time. Therefore we can also say that Gospel Order was most clearly revealed at the cross.

**John 3**

<sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

With these words Jesus first spoke of His coming death. The words "lifted up" have a double meaning. In one sense they refer to the manner of His death, namely to His being lifted up on the cross.

But the deeper and more important meaning is that Christ would be especially revealed. Just as a preacher goes into an elevated pulpit so that the entire congregation can see him, so the character of Christ had to be seen by everyone. And this is just what happened at the cross. In this way Christ drew the attention of all people to Himself—that is, to the revelation of God's character, which is Gospel Order.

## **John 12**

<sup>32</sup> And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself.

## **Philippians 2**

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thus we can see that Jesus Christ and His experience on the cross of Calvary provide the greatest revelation of Gospel Order. The cross of Christ is a special theme of study, worship, and praise, for the church of God on this earth, as well as in heaven. Paul writes,

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

He points out that the cross is the source of wisdom for Christians.

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>23</sup> But we preach Christ crucified...the power of God and the wisdom of God.

<sup>25</sup> Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Paul then confesses that he knows of no other theme than the cross.

### **1 Corinthians 2**

<sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

But this does not mean that Paul has nothing to say about the history of the Old Testament, or last day events, for example. Many statements in His letters testify that Paul did speak about these things. But he saw all these truths in the light of the cross. He saw that the cross of Christ was in all these other truths, and he also saw all the other gospel themes in the cross.

Paul also shows us that the cross is something to boast about.

### **Galatians 6**

<sup>14</sup> But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

This statement is in harmony with the words of David:

### **Psalms 119 [NRSV]**

<sup>97</sup> Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.

<sup>98</sup> Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me.

<sup>99</sup> I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your decrees are my meditation.

<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

<sup>101</sup> I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

<sup>102</sup> I do not turn away from your ordinances, for you have taught me.

*Revelation 5* gives us an insight into the fact that the cross will be the object of even greater praise throughout eternity. In this instance the cross is referred to as a slain lamb.

### **Revelation 5**

<sup>6</sup> And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain...

<sup>8</sup> ...the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

<sup>12</sup> Saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

<sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

<sup>14</sup> Then the four living creatures said, Amen! And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

In *The Desire of Ages* we find the following commentary on these verses:

**The Desire of Ages, p. 19:**

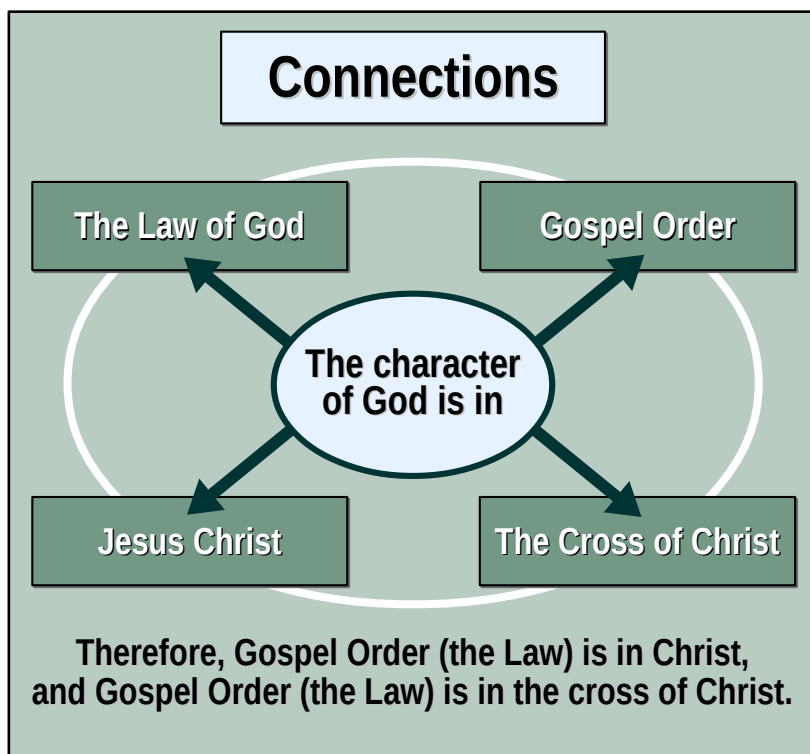
God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song.

It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeks not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto.

Since the cross of Christ is the greatest revelation of Gospel Order, the above text can also be read by substituting the phrase "Gospel Order" for "cross." This means that the people



of God will find their science and their song in Gospel Order.

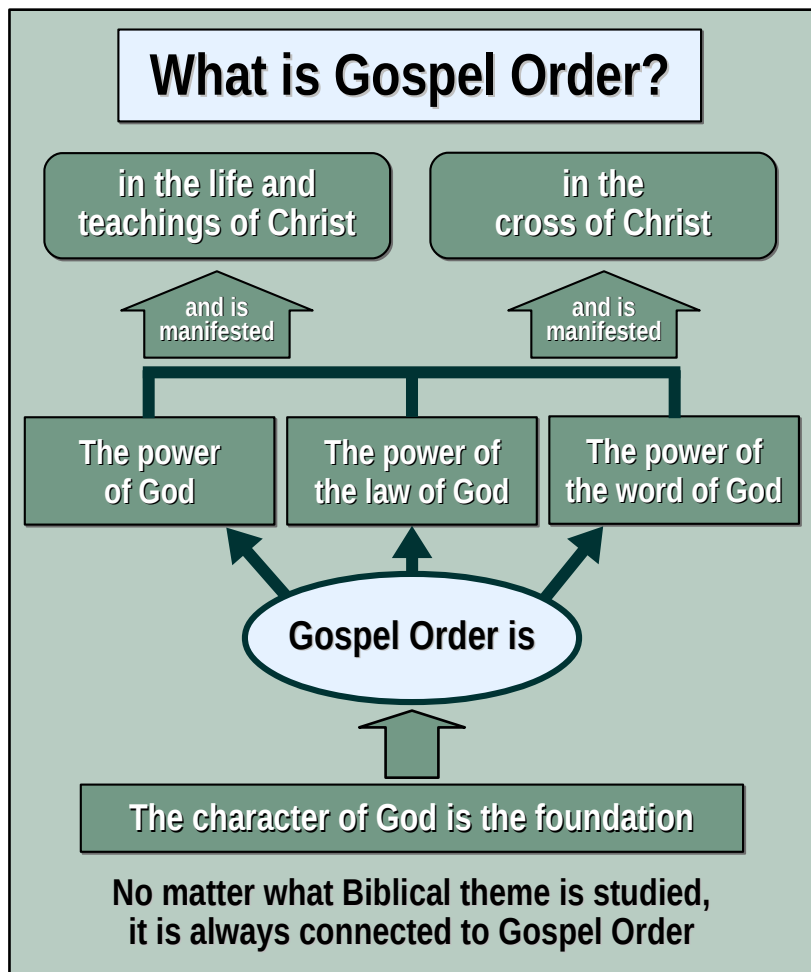


Even now the church can, and should, boast of Gospel Order, because it makes the believer wiser than all the wise men of the world. Gospel Order is an expression of the character of God, and of the self-renouncing love which is the law of life for heaven and earth.

This law is despised by the world, but for the people of God it is the saving gospel, the power of God, and the word of God. They see this law embodied in the life of Jesus, and most clearly revealed on the cross of Calvary.

A study of Gospel Order is extremely interesting when we have a biblical understanding of it. It is not limited to any particular book or story in the Bible. In fact, it is found throughout the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments. Gospel

Order is written on every page of the Bible.



It is also apparent that the theme of Gospel Order is not just a dry theory. The same power that created the universe is contained in this message. And it is this power which truly unites God's people and prepares them for the finishing of God's work on this earth.

### 3. The Foundation of the Church

#### **Matthew 16**

<sup>18</sup> On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

**W**HEN Jesus spoke these words, His disciples understood the meaning of the phrase “gates of Hades.” He revealed to them that the church that is built on the Rock cannot be overcome by death. In doing so, He gave them an important promise, especially in view of the sufferings that were about to fall on Him and the church.

<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

<sup>25</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Right up until the last, the disciples did not believe that Jesus would die. When He did die, they were almost paralyzed with horror. Had the gates of Hades overcome the church? It was unfortunate that the disciples did not remember that Jesus, who had foretold all that would take place, had also spoken of His resurrection. The proof of His victory over the gates of hell was given when He rose from the dead,

#### **Acts 2**

<sup>24</sup> ...because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

The disciples were finally convinced by Jesus' victory, and at last they realized that the gates of hell could not overcome the church.

#### **Romans 6**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal

life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now they had no more doubts and were no longer discouraged. As they followed Him, they gladly carried the same cross that Jesus had borne. Now they understood the promise that “whoever loses his life for my sake” cannot be overcome by the gates of Hades.

Jesus’ promise is also extremely important for us today because we are called to take up our crosses, just as Jesus and His disciples did. But we must also understand the conditions on which this promise is based. The conditions are that the church builds on “this rock.” Only by so doing can it stand against the gates of hell—sin and death. This leads us to the question, What is “this rock”? It is obviously a symbolic representation.

## **This Rock**

It is clear from the text of this verse that Jesus was talking to Peter.

### **Matthew 16**

<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

The Greek word for “Peter”<sup>3</sup> is a translation of the Aramaic word “Cephas.”<sup>4</sup> It was Jesus Himself who gave His disciple this name.

### **John 1**

<sup>42</sup> Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas (which is translated, A Stone).

In His conversation with Peter, was Jesus saying that His church should be built on His disciple, and that the church would not be overcome by the gates of Hades if it was built

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<sup>3</sup> *Petros* in Greek

<sup>4</sup> *kepha* means “rock” and sometimes “stone” in Hebrew

on this foundation? Certainly not! Peter was a fallible man who was overcome by both sin and death. Only a few moments after this talk Jesus had to correct him because he permitted himself to be used as an instrument by the enemy.

### **Matthew 16**

<sup>23</sup> But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

Later Peter even went so far as to deny his Lord, and after that Paul also had to rebuke Peter because he had fallen into sin again.

### **Galatians 2**

<sup>11</sup> But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

<sup>12</sup> For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

<sup>13</sup> And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; inasmuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

<sup>14</sup> But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

It is true that in all these examples Peter was willing to be cleansed from his sins, which is a great encouragement to us, but they also clearly show that Jesus could not build His church on the erring disciple. In fact, no one can claim that the church is built on them.

The question then remains, Why did Jesus call His disciple “Cephas” (a rock, stone)? And why did He say to him, “you are *a rock*, and on this rock I will build my church”?

It is not unusual that in Bible terminology different things

are called by the same name, just as different names are given to one and the same thing. An example of this is the word “law.” There is a moral law (which is explained in *Exodus* 20) and a ceremonial law (described in *Leviticus*). Although the Bible refers to them both with the same word, “law,” a distinction must be made between them.

The Bible writers sometimes use other words as well, for example “commandments” or “ordinances.” But in each case we need to differentiate between the two fundamentally different meanings, which can be gleaned from the context. It would be disastrous for us not to do so, as they have very different applications and significance for us.

The same is true for the word “rock.” It would be a mistake for us to give this word only one meaning. The biblical term “rock” is used much more often for Christ than it is for Peter. And Peter himself describes Christ as the Rock:

#### **1 Peter 2**

<sup>7</sup> ...the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

<sup>8</sup> And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense...

Peter spoke of this rock, or stone of stumbling, in his sermon to the Sanhedrin.

#### **Acts 4**

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

<sup>9</sup> If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

<sup>10</sup> Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

<sup>11</sup> This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.

<sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be

saved.

Jesus also referred to this rock of offense.

### **Matthew 21**

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

In the Old Testament the rock is used as a symbol to describe God.

### **Deuteronomy 32**

<sup>3</sup> For I proclaim the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness to our God.

<sup>4</sup> He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

### **Psalms 18**

<sup>1</sup> I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

### **Isaiah 28**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.

Paul refers to this Old Testament symbolism:

### **Romans 9**

<sup>32</sup> For they stumbled at that stumbling stone...

### **1 Corinthians 10**

<sup>4</sup> For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

So which rock is Jesus speaking of in *Matthew* 16:18? On which "Cephas" does He want to build His church—the church which the gates of Hades are unable to overcome?

Surely He is speaking of Himself, the Christ, for,

### **1 Corinthians 3**

<sup>11</sup> No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

As the Lord explained through Paul to the Corinthian church, it is not possible...

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>12</sup> ...that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ.

<sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

<sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

<sup>15</sup> Lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

### **1 Corinthians 3**

<sup>21</sup> Therefore let no one boast in men.

<sup>22</sup> For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours.

<sup>23</sup> And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 412:**

The word Peter signifies a stone,—a rolling stone. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The church was built upon One against whom the gates of hell could not prevail.

The Greek word *petros* (in English, “Peter”) usually means “a stone,” and sometimes “a piece of rock.” When used together with “petra” (rock), “petros” means a stone, or a piece of rock taken from a large rock. These two words are used in *Matthew*:

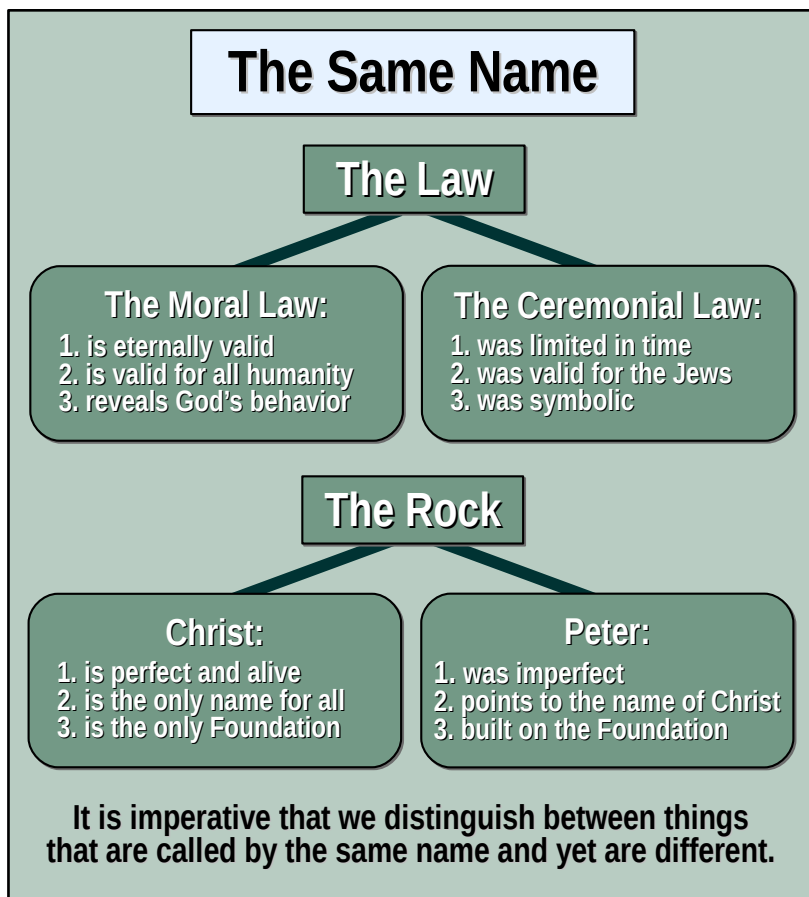
### **Matthew 16**

<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter [petros], and on this rock [petra] I will build my church.



Literally translated, this text reads:

“You are a piece of rock (taken from the rock which is Christ), and on this rock I will build my church.”<sup>5</sup>



Why did Jesus call His disciple Simon “a rock” when He Himself is the Rock on which the church is built? He did so to

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<sup>5</sup> Jesus would certainly have used the Aramaic word *kepha* in this connection since He spoke Aramaic. We do not know exactly how He formulated this sentence in Aramaic, but whoever believes in the divine inspiration of the Bible will be satisfied with Matthew's report, written in Greek, as a trustworthy account of the thoughts that Jesus expressed in Aramaic.

show that Simon Peter was made of the same kind of material as his Master. Peter had been taken out of the great Rock, and in his development he was to remain a part of that Rock by building on Christ—he was not to become independent.

### **Galatians 2**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

In order to understand this thought better let us compare Jesus' use of the word "rock" with His use of the word "light." Jesus said,

### **John 8**

<sup>12</sup> I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

And the disciple John wrote of Him,

### **John 1**

<sup>9</sup> That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

It is self-evident that apart from Jesus there is no light. He is not merely a light in the world, but the Light of the world. But, in speaking of His disciples, Jesus said,

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world.

How could Jesus say such a thing? Would it not lead those who are looking for the light of the world to become unnecessarily confused? Clearly, the answer is No! Jesus is the Light of the world, but He is also seen in and through His disciples.

### **John 17**

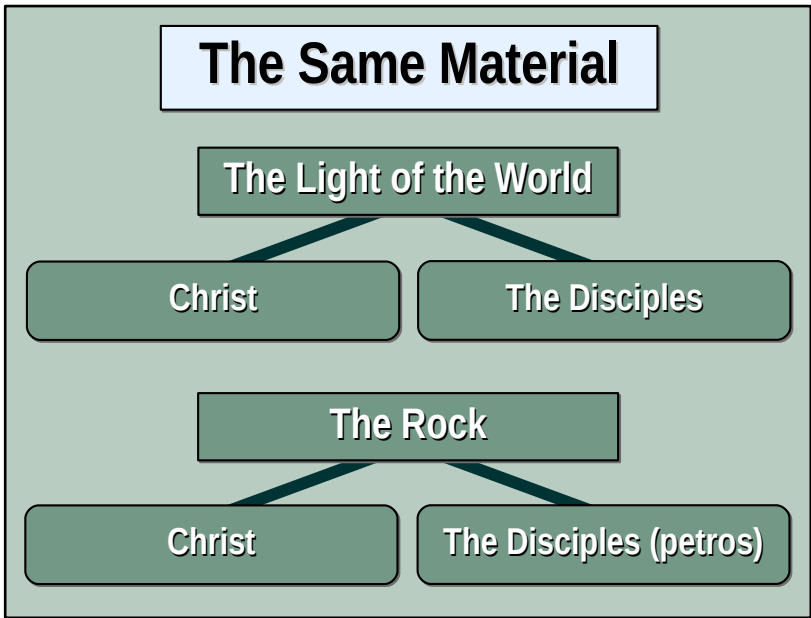
<sup>22</sup> And the glory which You gave me I have given them...

<sup>23</sup> ...that the world may know that You have sent me.

What is the difference between Christ, as the Light of the

world, and His disciples as the light of the world? In the first place, Jesus is the Source of light, whereas the disciples are receivers and channels through which the light is communicated to the world. Every disciple of Christ is a small light that is fed by Christ, the great Light. And the little light does not seek its own glory but endeavors to lead others to the greater Light—Christ. But whether the light is great or small, it is the same light.

In exactly the same way Christ wanted to be the rock of the church through Peter and his fellow disciples: Peter, the small rock, was to build on the great Rock and point others to Him. That is why Simon was given the name Cephas.



In the same way that God established the Old Testament church on the twelve sons of Jacob, so He established the church of the New Testament on the twelve apostles. The church is...

**Ephesians 2**

<sup>20</sup> ...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Je-

sus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

And of the New Jerusalem we read,

### **Revelation 21**

<sup>14</sup> Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

## **The Word of God**

Jesus also used the symbol of a rock in another way.

### **Matthew 7**

<sup>24</sup> Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

<sup>25</sup> And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

<sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

<sup>27</sup> And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

In this instance Jesus equates the rock with His sayings, that is, His word. But there is no contradiction between this and what we have learned so far about the rock. Christ is the Rock, but Christ is also the Word of God.

### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

That is why the word of God, that Jesus spoke, is also the rock on which the house of the church is built. Jesus was what He taught. In the parable of the sower Jesus makes this thought abundantly clear.

### **Luke 8**

<sup>5</sup> A sower went out to sow his seed.

Jesus was the sower, and the word that He preached was the seed. But He did not just sow any kind of seed. The seed that He sowed was His own, or in other words, He gave of Himself. In His word Jesus described His own character, His way of acting, and His experience.

**Christ's Object Lessons, p. 43:**

Christ taught the truth because He was the truth. His own thought, His character, His life-experience, were embodied in His teaching.

However, it is not just His character of love, goodness, and grace that is expressed in Christ's word. It is also a system, or order—Gospel Order. Christ Himself is this order. He lived it and He preached it.

The context in which Jesus made His statement about the rock being the foundation of the church shows that Gospel Order is the foundation of God's church. Jesus builds His church on the rock which Peter described in his confession:

**Matthew 16**

<sup>16</sup> You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That is the word of God, which contains His hidden power. That is the rock on which Jesus builds His church. That is Gospel Order.

**Who is the Son of Man?**

**Matthew 16**

<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

<sup>14</sup> So they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

<sup>15</sup> He said to them, But who do you say that I am?

<sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,

but my Father who is in heaven.

<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

<sup>19</sup> And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>20</sup> Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

Jesus directed the thoughts of His disciples to a very important theme by asking them the question:

“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

The church of God is not built on the opinions of men, but on the commands of the Lord. But Jesus had a specific purpose in mind when He showed such an interest in other people’s opinions.

As is usual when it comes to details, the various opinions differed in regard to this question, but they all had one thing in common. Although everyone considered Jesus to be an important personality, they were all wrong. The position that they ascribed to Jesus had already been filled by those who had prepared the way for Him—those who had pointed to His coming. Whereas Jesus Himself was the long-awaited Messiah.

Then Jesus asked the decisive question that tested the understanding of the disciples. Peter, in speaking for all the disciples, answered:

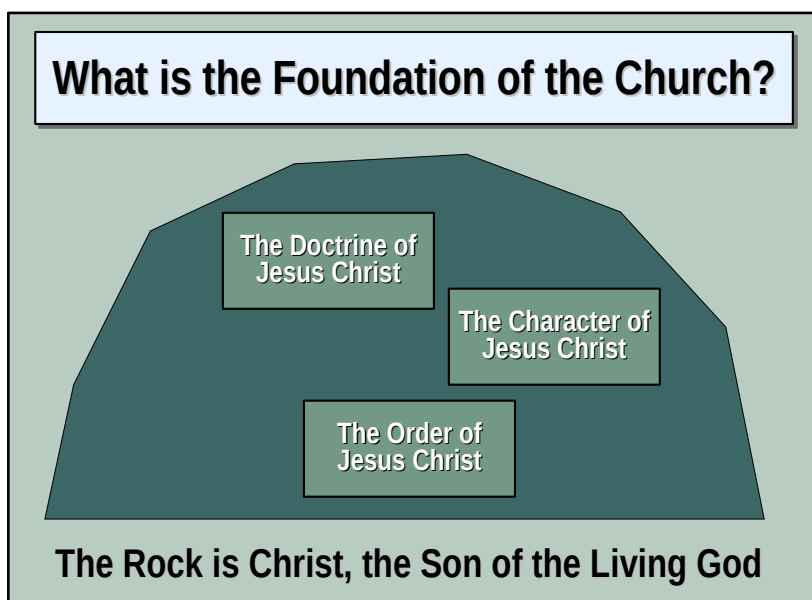
“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus’ reaction to this statement leads us to the conclusion that it contained a great spiritual truth.

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

In this way Jesus clearly revealed the contrast between human opinion and divine truth. If the church of God were led by opinion polls it would be hopelessly lost. But it builds on the rock of God's government—on the fact that God leads His church through Christ according to the principles of Gospel Order.

In this inspired statement Peter points to a decisive truth that is of the utmost importance for us today. "Christ, the Son of the living God," is the Rock on which God builds His church. When the church is established on this Rock it cannot be overcome by the gates of hell.



What depths of spiritual truth are contained in this! In this statement of Peter, the entire mystery of God is summarized, even...

### **Colossians 1**

<sup>26</sup> ...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

## The Messiah

It is of great import that Peter confessed the Saviour as “Christ.” The Greek word for “Christ” is a translation of the Aramaic “Messiah.” The English translation of this word is “the anointed.”

In Old Testament times, priests, kings, and prophets, were anointed at their dedication. The anointing gave authority to the person being dedicated. Whoever was anointed by divine appointment had to be respected in their position. The anointing was carried out by pouring oil over the head of the one called of God. The prophet Zechariah describes oil as a symbol for the Holy Spirit.

### **Zechariah 4**

<sup>1</sup> Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep.

<sup>2</sup> And he said to me, What do you see? So I said...

<sup>3</sup> ...two olive trees...

<sup>4</sup> So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?

<sup>6</sup> So he answered and said to me: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

<sup>11</sup> Then I answered and said to him, What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?

<sup>12</sup> And I further answered and said to him, What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?

<sup>14</sup> So he said, These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.

The anointing with oil symbolized that the one being called to office would fill their position in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why the people were to give them their due respect.

David gives us a good example of true respect for those called by the Lord. Although he was hunted like a dog by



King Saul, he said:

**1 Samuel 24**

<sup>6</sup> The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.

**1 Samuel 26**

<sup>9</sup> Who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?

<sup>11</sup> The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

<sup>23</sup> But I would not stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed.

The word unmistakably says:

**1 Chronicles 16**

<sup>22</sup> Do not touch my anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm.

David respected Saul as king, even when Saul was seeking to slay him, and in this way he showed his respect for the Lord. God also gives His anointed ones special protection to show His people that they should understand and respect the special position of the one appointed by the divine call and confirmed by their anointing. We read of a future "anointed one" (Messiah) in:

**Daniel 9 [NRSV]**

<sup>25</sup> Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks

<sup>26</sup> After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.

Many of the Jews were waiting for the appearing of this Messiah when the disciples found Him.

**John 1 [NRSV]**

<sup>41</sup> We have found the Messiah (which is translated Anointed).

So when was Jesus anointed, and in which position, or role,

was He confirmed? His anointing, or confirmation, took place at His baptism when the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and a voice from heaven announced,

### **Matthew 3**

<sup>17</sup> This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

But He was not just anointed to the position of Prophet. It is true that He was a prophet. After His ascension He became a priest. And when He comes again He will be King. But to what was He anointed at His baptism? The voice of God proclaimed very clearly:

### **Matthew 3**

<sup>17</sup> This is my beloved Son.

Jesus was the Son of the living God. He was confirmed as such at His baptism, and was later recognized by Peter as the same. Therefore at His baptism, Jesus was anointed as the Son.

“Christ [= Messiah, Anointed] the Son of the living God.”

*Matthew 16:16, John 6:69.*

As John says, Jesus was the only begotten Son of the Father. We understand this relationship because it is familiar to us in the human family. We know that a son has the nature of both his father and his mother within him. He has two natures. In the same way, Jesus has the nature of God, and that of a creature. That is why He can function as a Connector between the two.

Christ is both Son of man and Son of God. Nothing is more clearly described than this in the Bible. His human genealogy is described in *Matthew 1* and *Luke 2*, and His divine descent is confirmed again and again by His Father and Himself.

Paul, the writer of the book of *Hebrews*, shows that this double nature of Christ is the foundation of all revelation. The book begins with the words,

## Hebrews 1

<sup>1</sup> God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.

Then follows an extensive description of Jesus' role as the Son of God.

<sup>3</sup> Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

<sup>4</sup> Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

<sup>5</sup> For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

An explanation of His role as the Son of man follows that of His position as Son of God.

## Hebrews 2

<sup>6</sup> But one testified in a certain place, saying: What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him?

<sup>7</sup> You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor.

<sup>9</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

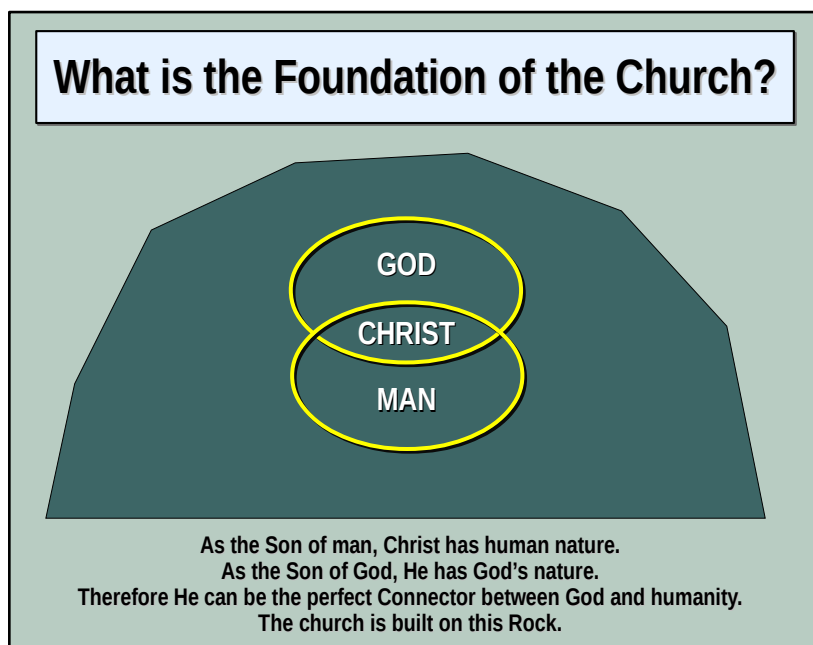
<sup>15</sup> And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

<sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is

able to aid those who are tempted.

There is no doubt that during His earthly life Jesus was recognized as the Son of man. Therefore, His question concerning His identity was not intended to find out if the people recognized him as such, but whether they understood who the Son of man actually was.



This is where the stumbling block lay. The Son of man was also the Son of God. And it was because Jesus repeatedly gave Himself this title that the Jews sought to kill Him.

### **John 5**

<sup>18</sup> Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He...said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

This stumbling block is the Rock on which God builds His church.

It is important to note that Jesus did not become the Son of

God at His baptism. He already was the Son of God before then. The anointing was simply a confirmation of a relationship that already existed.

### **John 3**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

This statement makes it clear that Jesus was already the Son when He was born in Bethlehem. The text does not say that Jesus became the Son when He came to this earth, but that God gave us His Son, who already existed, as a gift.

We must turn to the Old Testament to answer the question as to how long Jesus had been the Son, and if He had the nature of a creature, before His incarnation. Here we find Christ described in various roles and in different ways.

## **Prophetic and Symbolic Representations**

The first reference to the mysterious form of the Son of God is given in *Genesis*, where the Lord said to the serpent,

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

The serpent is a symbol for Satan (see *Revelation* 12:9). Ever since this promise was given, the people of God have waited for the Seed of the woman that would bruise Satan's head.

Abraham was given the same promise, but in different words:

### **Galatians 3**

<sup>16</sup> Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to your Seed, who is Christ.

And the promise was also given to other men of faith, such as David for example.

Jesus Himself made it quite clear that this Seed was not just a person who would exist at some time in the future, but that He existed during the times of the Old Testament.

### **Matthew 22**

<sup>41</sup> While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

<sup>42</sup> Saying, What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He? They said to Him, The Son of David.

<sup>43</sup> He said to them, How then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying:

<sup>44</sup> The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?

<sup>45</sup> If David then calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?

<sup>46</sup> And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

In these words Jesus showed the Pharisees that the Seed of the woman was a Man, but that He was also God.

### **John 8**

<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.

Many of the symbols that pointed to the Son of God were given through Moses. In *Exodus* 3 we read of the Lord appearing to His servant Moses in a burning bush. The remarkable thing about the burning bush was that the fire did not consume the bush. God connected a deep lesson with this symbol. The bush was but a simple, common shrub created by God, and yet the fire of His divinity dwelt in it without destroying it. This miracle was repeated in the incarnation of Christ.

### **Romans 8**

<sup>3</sup> [God sent] His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

### **John 1**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 23:**

The burning bush, in which Christ appeared to Moses, revealed God. The symbol chosen for the representation of the Deity was a lowly shrub, that seemingly had no attractions. This enshrined the Infinite. The all-merciful God shrouded His glory in a most humble type, that Moses could look upon it and live.

This same message was imparted through the symbol of the pillar of cloud which led the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt. It was an ordinary cloud, but the glory of the Lord dwelt within it.<sup>6</sup> The pillar of cloud was just another part of God's creation, but like the lowly bush it contained the presence of the Creator.

In the wilderness God also gave His people the symbol of the brazen serpent. When the Israelites looked towards it in faith they were healed. Concerning this symbol Jesus said:

**John 3**

<sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

<sup>15</sup> That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

The brazen serpent was also a symbol which represented the Son of God.

Then there was the sanctuary, which was erected according to the explicit instructions of the Lord. This building also served as a symbol for the Son of God. When the Lord gave the reason for erecting the tent He said:

**Exodus 25**

<sup>8</sup> And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

This corresponded closely with the mission of Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> See *Exodus* 16:10; 24:16; 40:34-35; *Numbers* 17:7.

## **Matthew 1**

<sup>23</sup> Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.

The exterior of the sanctuary was kept very plain and simple in order to illustrate the limitations of a creature, but within the ordinary-looking tent dwelt the Lord of glory. This again represented the mystery of the Lord of heaven living within humanity.

While there are yet more symbolic representations of the Son of God in the Old Testament, which describe Him as both God and creature, we also find some instances where He actually appeared.

## **Appearances in the Old Testament**

The prophets of the Old Testament probably knew much more about the Son of God than we can derive from their writings at first glance.

Daniel had gained the trust of Nebuchadnezzar by his interpretation of the king's dream, which enabled him to inform the king about his faith. He must also have told Nebuchadnezzar about the Son of God, because when Daniel's friends were later thrown into the fiery furnace the king looked in amazement and cried out,

## **Daniel 3**

<sup>24</sup> Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O king.

<sup>25</sup> Look! he answered, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

We are not told just how Nebuchadnezzar was able to recognize the Son of God. Perhaps it was not any particular mark or sign but simply the inspiration of the Spirit that convicted him. However, he would never have been able to say that it



was the Son of God if Daniel and his friends had not previously spoken of Him. Christ, the Son of God, was indeed with the faithful three in the furnace, and He protected them from the flames.

If Christ was the Son of God before His incarnation in Bethlehem, then the question naturally arises as to what form He appeared in. Of His incarnation as a man we read:

### **Romans 8**

<sup>3</sup> God [sent] His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

But He did not have this likeness in the Old Testament. To be a Son, however, implies the possession of two natures. So which nature did He have apart from the nature of God? It must have been the nature of a creature, or He would not have qualified as the Connector between God and creature.

In fact He possessed the nature of an angel. Jesus often appeared as an angel in the Old Testament. In speaking of this it is written,

### **Exodus 23**

<sup>20</sup> Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

<sup>21</sup> Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in Him.

<sup>22</sup> But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

<sup>23</sup> For my Angel will go before you.

Christ was the Angel who led Israel in the pillar of cloud. Christ also appeared to the patriarch Abraham, as it is written,

### **Genesis 18**

<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

Jacob struggled with an angel, who was Christ. *Genesis* 32:23-33.

Christ was hidden in the burning bush when He met with Moses:

### **Exodus 3**

<sup>2</sup> And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.

Balaam also saw Christ as an angel:

### **Numbers 22**

<sup>31</sup> He saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> chapters of *Daniel*, the Son of God is further referred to as “Michael”:

### **Daniel 10**

<sup>21</sup> But I will show you that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holds with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

And in *Jude* as “Michael the Archangel”:

### **Jude**

<sup>9</sup> Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses...

## **The Meaning of Angel**

We have seen how the church of God is built on this Rock—the Son of God. In this context we are particularly interested in the practical consequences of the fact that Christ is both God and creature.

The English word *angel* comes from the Greek and means “herald” or “messenger.” The Aramaic word is *mal’ak* which means “messenger” or “representative.” Christ, in the form of an angel, was the Messenger in the Old Testament. He was not just a messenger but the first and highest Messenger. This

is indicated in His title as “archangel.”

#### **1 Thessalonians 4**

<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

#### **Jude**

<sup>9</sup> Yet Michael the *archangel*, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses...

The preposition *arch* also comes from Greek and means “the first,” “the original,” and “the highest.” Christ is the Messenger of all messengers. He is the first One to give a message; He is the Origin of all messages; and He is the highest of all God’s messengers. In this study we will use the term “primary messenger,” which is intended to convey all these aspects of the word “archangel.”

Christ, as the Rock, is the Foundation for every other stone, or messenger, of God. He is the Pattern for what every messenger should be according to the will of God.

### **Christ the Primary Messenger**

The role of Christ as the primary messenger, or archangel, lies at the heart of Gospel Order. This role is described in the words:

#### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In the previous chapter we have seen that in this verse Christ is referred to as the Word. “In the beginning was Christ”—the word used here for “beginning” is again the Greek word “arch”<sup>7</sup> as used in the term “archangel.” The word comes through Christ first—the word originates with Him. He is the Primary Messenger.

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<sup>7</sup> Greek: *arche*.

The use of the word “arch” excludes the possibility that the word of God could originate with any other messenger. It always comes through the Son of God first. But that is not all. We read:

### **John 1**

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

The creation of the world was accomplished by the word of God:

### **Psalm 33**

<sup>9</sup> He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Therefore, God creates or makes things by speaking. Whenever God speaks He creates something, because His word has creative power.

### **Isaiah 55**

<sup>10</sup> For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

<sup>11</sup> So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

From *John* 1:3 we understand that all the works of God were created by Christ, just as all the words of God are spoken through Christ. The word of God never goes directly from Him to His creatures, it always goes through the Son, which is why He is called “the Word.”

It is easy for us to imagine what difficulties the disciples had to struggle with because they could not really believe that God did everything through Christ.

### **John 14**

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is suffi-

cient for us.

They had to learn to be content with the fact that everything they needed to know about God would come through Christ. They were not given direct access to God, nor was this necessary, because Jesus faithfully passed on God's messages.

<sup>10</sup> The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority.

Like many others, Philip would have imagined that God spoke directly to Adam, Abraham, or Moses in the Old Testament. But this concept overlooks the fact that Christ is equal with God. The Bible confirms that the Son is also designated as God:

### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Therefore, when we read that God spoke to His servants in the Old Testament, we know that it was via Christ.

Jesus filled His position as Primary Messenger under all circumstances—in the Old Testament as the archangel Michael, and in the New Testament as the Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Anointed. This role of Primary Messenger is perfectly summarized in His words:

### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

## **God's Way**

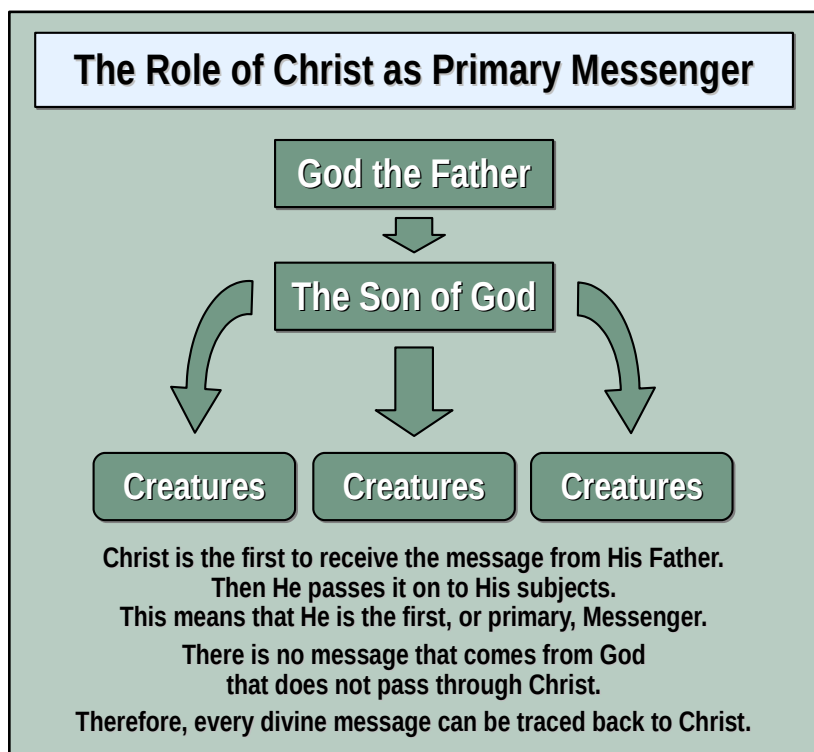
Gospel Order is God's way. It is the way He builds His kingdom. The devil and people may suggest other ways, but God abides by His way because it is not just a good way, it is the only way that leads to life. He says:

### **John 14**

<sup>6</sup> I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the

Father except through me.

God is not like finite man, who arbitrarily marks out a path and then stubbornly sticks to it, even if better ways have transpired in the meantime. No, He who knows everything in advance, who is perfect and makes no mistakes, who is Himself infinite love, has formed the only path that leads to life. This is the way of Gospel Order, and in this way the Primary Messenger is the only One through whom God sends us every message.



We may not fully understand the reason for this way. We may ask why God always speaks to His creatures through Christ, and not directly. But in view of the omnipotence and love of God we should cast aside every doubt. It is our privilege to fall into His arms in faith. We can put our implicit

trust in Him and know that His way is the best way for us. Trusting in Him, we can walk in His way and know that it leads to life.

If we have a firm trust in God, then we will be able to look more deeply into the ocean of His grace. Thus we will continually grow and our understanding of God's wisdom in Gospel Order will increase.

## **God Speaks Through a Creature**

The mystery of the rock—the foundation on which the church is built—is especially seen in the fact that God reveals Himself in and through a creature. This is obviously an important part of Gospel Order. And so it is written,

### **Hebrews 2**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

The reason for this follows:

<sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 296:**

Christ took upon Himself humanity, that He might reach humanity. Divinity needed humanity; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. Divinity needed humanity, that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 143:**

In taking upon Himself humanity, our Saviour unites His interests with those of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, while through His divinity He grasps the throne of God. And thus Christ is the medium of communication of men with God, and of God with men.

These statements confirm that only the way of Gospel Or-

der can lead us to God. Christ “had to be made like His brethren” in all things. There was no other way! Divinity “needed” humanity to form a channel of communication. This does not mean that God is dependent on humans. He could have chosen a different way, and given us up to be lost forever. But God is not only omnipotent, He is also infinite love, and these two characteristics, taken together, will allow only one way.

Gospel Order is the foundation of the church of God throughout all ages. And because it is a sure and eternal foundation, the gates of Hades cannot overcome it.

In the course of history, the church has seemed to be extremely weak at times, and even in danger of complete extinction. But as long as there were believers who built on this rock, it could never be extinguished. And there have always been such faithful ones at all times.

All the powers of this world, irrespective of the extent to which they use the weapons of deception, persecution, and even death, cannot overcome the true church. Built on the Rock, she is destined to be the victor!



## 4. The Role of the Son

**G**OSPEL order is the foundation of the church. And the role of the Son of God forms the core of Gospel Order. To the confession of Peter,

### **Matthew 16**

<sup>16</sup> You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,

Jesus answered,

<sup>18</sup> On this rock I will build my church.

In order to understand Gospel Order we need to take a closer look at the role of the Son. The roles of the Son and the primary messenger are the same, and are best expressed in the following words:

### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

We really need to meditate on this text in order to gain a right understanding of its deep meaning. Some may tend to reject a literal interpretation of these words because they appear so extreme. We might even justifiably ask whether a full-grown person would ever want to say such a thing. Would not such a statement be a confession that he is no more than a shadow of his father, and that he always needs to be in his presence before he can do anything? In fact, in the light of the above statement could such a person ever develop his own personality?

Jesus meant exactly what He said. He was fully aware of the meaning of His words. They were not a denial that He had a personality of His own. He could have acted differently, and He was tempted to do so, but He did not. In the garden of Gethsemane He pleaded with His Father,

## **Matthew 26**

<sup>39</sup> O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.

If Jesus had no personality of His own, He could never have uttered this prayer. And yet He never strayed from the will of His Father. If He had done so, He would no longer have been the Son of God. In other words, Jesus can be a true Son only when He does what He sees the Father do, and does it in the same way.

We are completely dependent on the faithfulness of the Son, and it is only because of His faithfulness that we have reliable statements about God. If Christ had been unfaithful, even to the slightest degree, then we would know quite a bit about Jesus, but nothing really reliable about the Father. Philip did not understand how perfectly Jesus was the Word of God, as is evident from his request:

## **John 14**

<sup>8</sup> Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.

Jesus' reply further illustrates His role as Primary Messenger.

<sup>9</sup> Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, Show us the Father?

<sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works.

<sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

It is in this sense that Christ referred to Himself as the Way to God.

## **John 14**

<sup>6</sup> I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

We are here given a view of a Person who is an absolutely faithful helper. If all messengers would carry out their ministry as faithfully as Christ, there would be no more errors and no more division.

## **An Example**

Sin has marred the image of God in humanity. That is why it is so difficult to find such an ideal son as Christ. Adam and Eve would certainly have hoped that their first-born son would be the promised Seed that God had foretold.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

They surely would have imagined that Cain would be the One to bruise Satan's head. But the expectations of our first parents were not fulfilled. Instead of this, Cain became a murderer and the father of an apostate race that perished in the flood. It is only through the work of redemption that we are able to have a better lineage.

### **1 John 3**

<sup>1</sup> Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

And it is only because of this salvation that we have reliable illustrations of the role of the Son in the Old Testament.

### **John 8**

<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.

With these words Jesus indicated that Abraham had come to a deeper understanding of the Christ, just as Peter had when he said,

### **Matthew 16**

<sup>16</sup> You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Abraham's experiences are recorded in *Genesis* chapters 12-25. And the event which helped him understand the role of the son more than any other is related in:

### **Genesis 22**

<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! And he said, Here I am.

<sup>2</sup> Then He said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

<sup>3</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

<sup>4</sup> Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

<sup>5</sup> And Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.

<sup>6</sup> So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

<sup>7</sup> But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, My father! And he said, Here I am, my son. Then he said, Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

<sup>8</sup> And Abraham said, My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. So the two of them went together.

<sup>9</sup> Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

<sup>10</sup> And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

<sup>11</sup> But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham! So he said, Here I am.

<sup>12</sup> And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.

<sup>13</sup> Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

<sup>14</sup> And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.

<sup>15</sup> Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,

<sup>16</sup> And said: By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—

<sup>17</sup> Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

<sup>18</sup> In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

<sup>19</sup> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

That this experience is related to the role of the son is seen in the word of God:

<sup>2</sup> Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love...

This introduction is then followed by a narration of Abraham and Isaac's experience after God had given them His command. Isaac was a young man who understood his role as a son and was faithful in that role. His respectful attitude is seen in the way that he spoke to his father.

<sup>7</sup> But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, My father!

At this point most children would immediately carry on talking and express their thoughts. But Isaac waited until his father was ready and gave him permission to speak.

<sup>7</sup> ...And he said, Here I am, my son.

Only after Abraham had replied did Isaac continue speak-

ing.

<sup>7</sup> ...Then he said, Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

Abraham did not yet reveal any details to his son, and Isaac did not question him any further. But the time soon came when Abraham had to tell him the terrible truth that Isaac himself was to be the sacrifice. If Isaac had tried to escape at this time then Abraham, who was now an old man, would have been helpless to prevent him. But Isaac was willing to be sacrificed.

## **Genesis 22**

<sup>9</sup> Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 152:**

At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those three terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth.

But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission. He was a sharer in Abraham's faith, and he felt that he was honored in being called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten the father's grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar.

This spirit of self-sacrifice clearly reveals what a true son is. He obeys his father in everything. He does not think and act independently. The life of the father is his life, and the father's command is his command. And so the meaning of Jesus'

words becomes evident:

### **John 8**

<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my [Christ, the Son of the living God's] day, and he saw it and was glad.

At the same time, we too are given a deeper insight into the role of the Son, or Primary Messenger.

Sarah, Isaac's mother, died at the age of 127. *Genesis* 23:1-2. When her son was born she was 91 years old (see *Genesis* 17:17, 21), which means that Isaac was 36 when his mother died. At this point in time he was not married. Abraham was 136 years old when his wife died, and a few more years passed by before he began to think seriously about finding a wife for his son. The Bible simply says,

### **Genesis 24**

<sup>1</sup> Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age...

The question of the seed was also of great importance for Isaac, because the promise that a seed would be forthcoming to bruise Satan's head was still to be fulfilled. But it was not Isaac's responsibility to try to fulfill the conditions himself. Despite Isaac's age, it was still his father's responsibility to choose a wife for him, and Isaac waited patiently. It was in harmony with the role of a son to wait for his father, and he faithfully filled this role.

## **The Reliability of the Channel**

Christ, as the Son of God, is the Primary Messenger. Every word that God speaks comes through His Son to all creation. And Christ is absolutely faithful. We can be sure that the message comes to us just as God gives it because Christ does not add anything to it, nor does He keep anything back. He is a reliable channel.

In order to appreciate the message—carrying role of the son better, let us compare it with other forms of information ser-

vices. Unfortunately, for the most part we find only unreliable channels in the world. Usually people add something to a message, or take part of it away. That is why the Lord has given us the following warning in His word.

### **Revelation 22**

<sup>18</sup> For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

<sup>19</sup> And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

It is quite common for people to include their personal opinions when passing on news. Although the impression is often given that the information is completely objective, that is hardly ever the case.

Let us take the daily newspapers for example. Anyone who has been interviewed knows that in the finished article, as it is finally published, it is difficult to find what was really said or meant. In fact, the article is simply a reflection of the opinion of its author, which in turn is molded by what the readers expect. All the statements are presented, or twisted, in the light of this opinion, so that the readers are subtly imbued with what they are supposed to believe.

In most cases this is a harmless game, but there are also examples where people have been prepared for war, a coup, or some other significant change, by skillfully manipulated news.

Anyone who has had the opportunity of traveling to different countries knows that news is rarely objective. The same events are presented in quite a different light in the various countries. National opinion plays a prime role. News has to be “sold,” and one of the rules of business is that demand determines supply. In other words, the news has to agree with whatever the audience wants to hear or read.



But it is not only in the official news that opinion plays a disastrous role. How much alienation, and even hostility, has been kindled, or increased, by an unfaithful representation—when the information is mixed with the opinions of the narrator!

A biblical example of this can be seen in the history of Doeg when he passed on some information to Saul. In his flight from Saul, David had come to the high priest Ahimelech, to whom he lied in order to avoid difficulties and dragging him into his own perilous situation. David claimed to have been sent on a special mission by Saul and asked Ahimelech for some bread.

### **1 Samuel 21**

<sup>7</sup> Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord. And his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul.

When David saw Doeg he felt uneasy and quickly asked Ahimelech for a sword before setting off on his flight again. *1 Samuel* 21:9-11. Shortly after this Doeg reported the whole matter to King Saul—but in a completely different light.

### **1 Samuel 22**

<sup>9</sup> I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

<sup>10</sup> And he inquired of the Lord for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.

This information was given in such a way as to deliberately awaken the worst passions in Saul.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 659:**

Doeg the Edomite turned informer. Moved by ambition and avarice, and by hatred of the priest, who had reproved his sins, Doeg reported David's visit to Ahimelech, representing the matter in such a light as to kindle Saul's anger against the man of God. The words of that mischievous tongue, set on fire of hell, stirred up the worst passions in

Saul's heart.

## The Words of Men

It is true that Saul was already prejudiced against David and that he therefore hated anyone who showed him even the slightest favor. But Doeg's report played an important part in the evil that was to follow. David described the work of such people in the following way:

### 1 Samuel 24

<sup>9</sup> Why do you listen to the words of men who say, Indeed David seeks your harm?

In this text David refers to the accounts of dishonest reporters as "the words of men." Such reports are completely unreliable, whereas the words of God are eminently reliable. In *Jeremiah* 23 the words of men are simply referred to as lies:

### Jeremiah 23

<sup>31</sup> Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their tongues and say, He says.

<sup>32</sup> Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord.

Paul calls the words of men "idle talk" or "idle babblings."

### 1 Timothy 1

<sup>5</sup> Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

<sup>6</sup> From which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

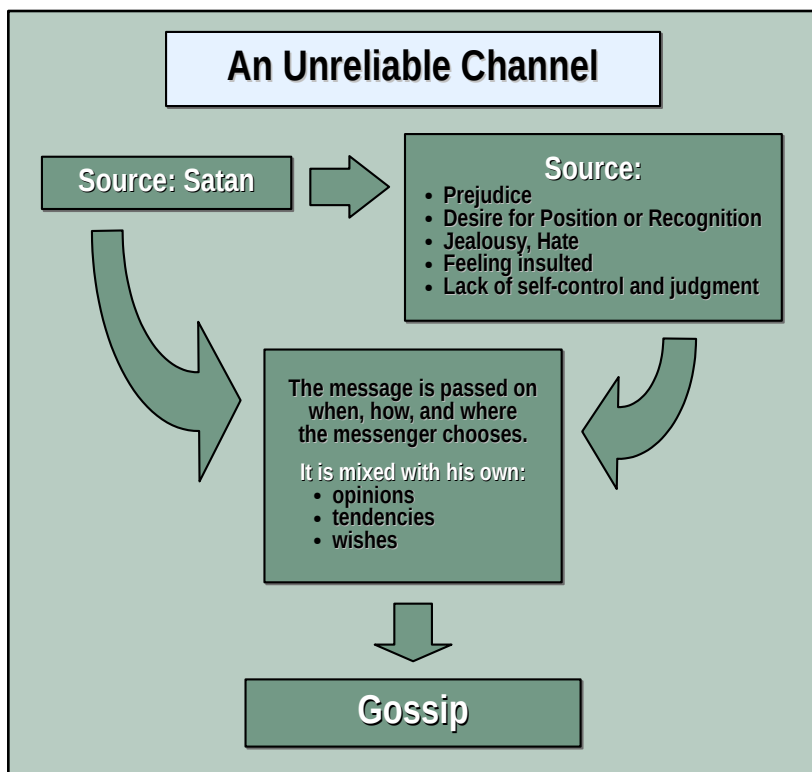
<sup>7</sup> Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

### 2 Timothy 2

<sup>15</sup> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

<sup>16</sup> But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

Idle words, or babbling, is simply gossip. What makes a person into a “gossiper”? Whenever information is colored with our own opinion, and passed on when, where, and how we choose, without reference to the author of the information, we are gossipers. We are unfaithful, unreliable channels, and our messages are a terrible curse to our neighbors and for the church.



**A Solemn Appeal, p. 162:**

When parents, especially mothers, have a true sense of the responsible work God has left for them to do, they will not be so much engaged in the business which concerns their neighbors, with which they have nothing to do. They will not engage in the fashionable gossip from house to house,

dwelling upon the faults and inconsistencies of their neighbors. They will feel so great a burden of care for their own children that they can find no time to take up a reproach against their neighbor. Gossipers and news-carriers are a terrible curse to neighborhoods and churches. Two-thirds of all the church trials arise from this source.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 241:**

Difficulties are often caused by the vendors of gossip, whose whispered hints and suggestions poison unsuspecting minds and separate the closest friends. Mischief-makers are seconded in their evil work by the many who stand with open ears and evil heart, saying: "Report,...and we will report it." This sin should not be tolerated among the followers of Christ. No Christian parent should permit gossip to be repeated in the family circle or remarks to be made disparaging the members of the church.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 94:**

It pains me to say that there are unruly tongues among church members. There are false tongues that feed on mischief. There are sly, whispering tongues. There is tattling, impertinent meddling, adroit quizzing. Among the lovers of gossip some are actuated by curiosity, others by jealousy, many by hatred against those through whom God has spoken to reprove them. All these discordant elements are at work. Some conceal their real sentiments, while others are eager to publish all they know, or even suspect, of evil against another.

**The Indiana Reporter, May 8, 1907:**

The church is in need, not of burdens [from those who dwell on the mistakes of others], not of fault-finders, but of builders in Zion, men who will be true as steel to preserve the honor of those whom God has placed at the head of his work. The spirit of gossip and tale bearing is one of Satan's special agencies to sow discord and strife, to separate friends, and to undermine the faith of many in the truthfulness of our positions.

### **Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 609:**

Mutual love and confidence must be encouraged and strengthened in the members of the church. Let all, in the fear of God and with love to their brethren, close their ears to gossip and censure. Direct the talebearer to the teachings of God's word. Bid him obey the Scriptures and carry his complaints directly to those whom he thinks in error. This united action would bring a flood of light into the church and close the door to a flood of evil. Thus God would be glorified, and many souls would be saved.

The unreliable messengers mentioned in these statements may not see themselves in the role of a messenger but they are such, because whoever passes on information is a messenger. If a person passes on a message which does not correlate with the facts of a case but only expresses his own opinion then he is actually a primary messenger because he is the source of the message. Satan is really the author of such a message, but in doing this work the gossipers make themselves a primary channel of evil.

James points out the connection between an unfaithful messenger, or teacher, and a gossip when he says,

#### **James 3**

<sup>1</sup> My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

<sup>4</sup> Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

<sup>5</sup> Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.

<sup>6</sup> The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

What leads a person to become an unfaithful channel? There are various reasons for taking such a step. In Doeg's case it was a rebuke that Ahimelech gave him. He felt so of-

fended that he hated the faithful messenger. This in turn led him to become a primary channel of destruction. Feeling insulted is a frequent cause of unfaithfulness when passing on messages or information.

Another very common reason is the desire for recognition or position. People love praise and admiration.

“You did a good job. Only you could do it so well! You are so clever!”

These are words that ambition loves to hear. Even the task of preaching the Word can be tainted by the desire for recognition. In order to be admired and gain applause, or in an effort to be promoted, a preacher may present new and exciting ideas so that he will appear to be an original thinker.

Spiritual pride is the reason for a lot of erroneous messages. Whoever has the final word in a debate creates fame for himself and appears to be interesting and exciting. In such cases the messenger is not so much concerned with passing on a message faithfully, as being the victor in a religious controversy.

Sometimes the main reason is envy or jealousy and by:

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 241:**

...a lack of self-control, by the indulgence of passion or prejudice, by instability or lack of judgment, the church may be disturbed and her peace sacrificed.

Whether in a small circle, a group discussion, or in the pulpit—the same principles apply everywhere. Whatever remarks, information, or messages we pass on to others must come up to the rigid standard of truth—the standard by which each of us should carefully test our habits.

## **What, When, Where, and How**

As we have seen, the messenger can be a faithful son only when he gives the message exactly as he received it. He is not

the author of the message. Therefore, there is no reason to praise him because of his “deep thoughts,” because he is not the originator of them. He is only the channel of communication. Whoever passes on what the Lord intends, in His spirit, creates the conditions necessary for the fulfillment of the promise:

#### **Matthew 24**

<sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

It is usually emphasized that in order for the “end” to come the message must be preached “in all the world,” and that this will be “a witness to all the nations.” But it is often overlooked that there is another condition, namely that it is “this gospel” that has to be preached. Only when “this gospel” of the Father is faithfully preached can the end come.

However, it is not just a matter of passing on the correct message. It is just as important to consider the time when a message is given. If it is given at the wrong point of time, even the truth can produce bad results. Jesus said to His disciples,

#### **John 16**

<sup>12</sup> I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

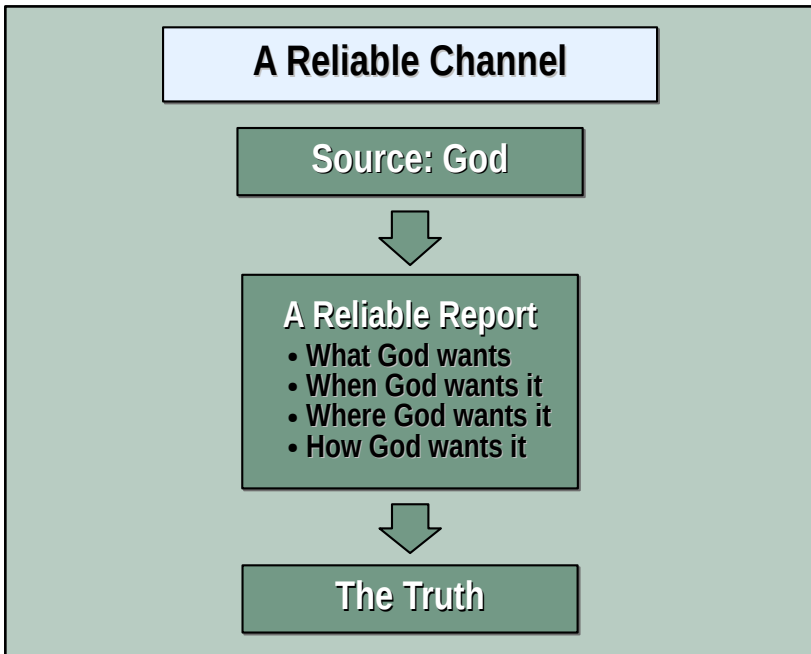
From this statement we see that a messenger needs specific instructions as to when the time is ripe for a message to be given. The messenger’s faithfulness is further seen in his preaching the message at the right place and to the right people. A reliable channel does not send himself. He is a son who goes where his Father sends him. In this connection Luke’s report of a particular journey of the apostles is very significant.

#### **Acts 16**

<sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, Come over to

Macedonia and help us.

<sup>10</sup> Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.



Philip was also a true son who went wherever his Father sent him.

### **Acts 8**

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert.

<sup>27</sup> So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning.

<sup>28</sup> And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and overtake this chariot.



### **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:**

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them.

Finally, the faithfulness of the messenger is also dependent on how he passes on the message. By this we do not mean the outward form of the preaching, but the character in which it is given.

### **Matthew 12**

<sup>19</sup> He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.

Preaching is done not only in word but also in deed. Jesus spent more time in healing than in teaching. That is what the Father had decided for Him, and that is what He did.

## **The Confusion at Babel**

In a large business where managers are constantly allocating tasks to the various departments everything is dependent on accurate communication in order for everyone to have a correct understanding of their responsibility. Business success relies on it. The larger the company, the more important a seamless communication is.

But this is exactly where the problem lies, and it is the cause of the torpor from which many large companies suffer—a lack of reliable channels. Each person wants to distinguish themselves by adding their own thoughts to the information that they are supposed to pass on. That is the reason why some things end up completely differently from what was originally intended.

Most children know the “whisper” game. All who take part in the game form a circle and then one person whispers something to the next one. The message, which is whispered from ear to ear, should be an unknown word or phrase, or in a foreign language. The one who hears the message last then

speaks it out loud and this is compared with what the originator of the message actually said. If it is the same message then all the participants were faithful channels. If it is not the same, then at least one of the channels has been inaccurate, even though this was not intended. This game is a nice illustration of how important it is to pass on a message accurately.

Sacred history relates another event in which the disastrous effects of inaccurate communication is very clearly illustrated. The people of that time had decided to erect a tremendous building which, however, they never completed—the tower of Babel. The builders of the tower gave the following reason for their project:

### **Genesis 11**

<sup>4</sup> Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

Obviously the unity of the people of Babel was not particularly strong at this time for they sought some means of securing their communal life. Other people use war as a means of achieving the same goal. In times of secular prosperity it is often material, scientific, or athletic achievements which promote the national identity and solidarity of the people.

But none of these external measures leads to real unity. In fact, in the final analysis they will prove to be a curse, as the tower of Babel clearly demonstrates. The fundamental disunity is caused by each person wanting to be the greatest and the best. Simply being a reliable channel brings neither fame nor position, and so no value is placed on it. Instead of the message being passed on as it was received, it is changed, twisted, and “improved,” until in the end something completely different comes out. God permitted things to follow their natural course at Babel, and the confusion of languages that resulted brought the work on the building to a standstill.

## Genesis 11

<sup>8</sup> So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 119:**

The tower had reached a lofty height, and it was impossible for the workmen at the top to communicate directly with those at the base; therefore men were stationed at different points, each to receive and report to the one next below him the orders for needed material or other directions concerning the work.

As messages were thus passing from one to another the language was confounded, so that material was called for which was not needed, and the directions delivered were often the reverse of those that had been given. Confusion and dismay followed. All work came to a standstill. There could be no further harmony or cooperation.

The builders were wholly unable to account for the strange misunderstandings among them, and in their rage and disappointment they reproached one another. Their confederacy ended in strife and bloodshed.

Although it was God's intention that the people should spread out,<sup>8</sup> in order to prevent apostasy making such rapid progress, it did have a negative effect which God would have liked to spare them, and which was never His will. The scattering from Babel also included division.<sup>9</sup> People were divided in spirit and were not merely geographically separated, as God had intended. They became enemies and were destined to war with one another until the end of time.

The confusion of languages had its counterpart in the mira-

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<sup>8</sup> According to the will of God, Noah's descendants were not to gather together in one place but to spread out over all the earth. This is apparent from *Genesis* 9:1: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew word (*hepism*), used in *Genesis* 11:9 not only means "to scatter" but also "to break" or "to divide".

cle of Pentecost when the Lord gave the disciples the ability to speak in other languages.

### **Acts 2**

<sup>7</sup> Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?

<sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

<sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

<sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.

Like the catastrophe at Babel, this miracle had spiritual causes. Before the communication difficulties could be eliminated, the disciples had to come close together in Christian fellowship. This made them reliable channels and true sons of their heavenly Father, as it is written,

### **Acts 1**

<sup>14</sup> These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.

### **Acts 2**

<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

### **Acts 4**

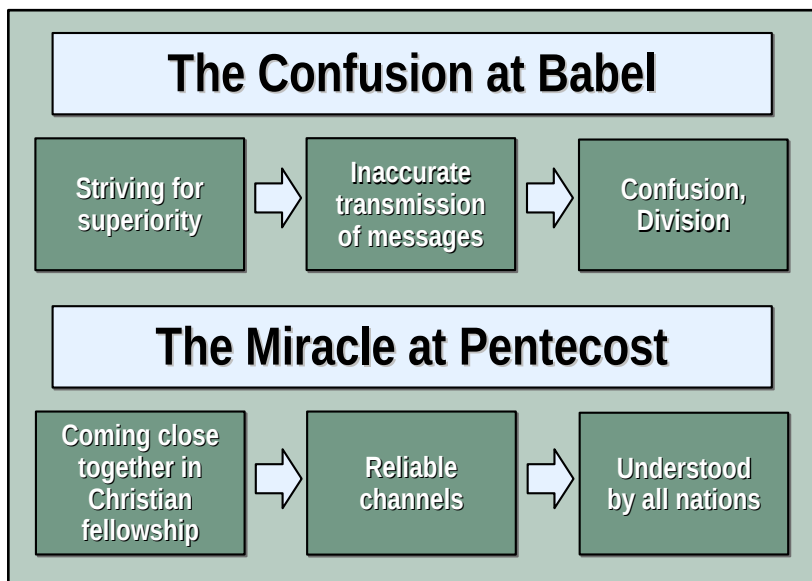
<sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul.

### **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:**

The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship.

This self-denial enabled the disciples to become true and

pure channels for the Holy Spirit, and that is why the people were able to understand them. When the message is accompanied by such power then it can indeed be understood by all.



The people of Babel who originally spoke one language soon began to misunderstand one another because they were not unified. In contrast to this the disciples spoke in many languages at Pentecost and yet they were understood. The people of Babel were gossipers, but at Pentecost the disciples conveyed only the truth as true sons, just as Christ did as a true Son.

## Order in Revelation

The last book of the Bible, Revelation, bears the title *The Revelation of St. John* in most translations. This title, chosen by the Bible translators, is not a fitting one because it is not an accurate description of the contents of the book. For example, we read in the first verse,

### Revelation 1

<sup>1</sup> The Revelation of Jesus Christ...

Nowhere is it written that it is the revelation of John.

What is a revelation? A revelation is a disclosure of something that was previously hidden. Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, is the great theme of the Bible. His character, His life, His work, and His messages are all disclosed in this final book of the Bible. And so we also find the role of the Son clearly described here. This description is given right at the start of the book.

<sup>1</sup> The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him.

Although it is the revelation of Jesus Christ, it does not come from Him but from the Father. This accurately reveals the role of the Son.

### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> The Son can do nothing of Himself.

He does not even give a revelation of Himself unless He has first received it from the Father. Who would not claim the right to speak for themselves concerning their own person! But the Son receives it from His Father. He trusts that His Father knows Him thoroughly and gives Him the right message concerning Himself. He also trusts the Father to decide when, where, and how He, as the Son, should pass on this revelation.

How much more does it befit us to humbly take up our roles as sons and daughters! We often have experiences that we consider very important and therefore think we are experts in these areas. It is true that experiences do make us more mature and give us insights into certain procedures, but that is no reason for self-exaltation.

Some people go through experiences without learning anything. They do not understand the depths of their experience. Only if we let God's word explain our experiences can we rightly interpret them. And even if we understand them correctly we should still pass them on only at the time and place which God determines. Finally, we need to retain true humil-

ity and make it clear that even in the areas where we do have experience we are still only channels. In this way we take up our roles as sons and daughters.

In the Revelation various people are mentioned, apart from Christ, who are also expected to take up the role of a son.

### **Revelation 1**

<sup>1</sup> The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

<sup>4</sup> John, to the seven churches which are in Asia.

### **Revelation 2**

<sup>1</sup> To the angel of the church of Ephesus write...

The other people mentioned are:

- The angel of the Lord
- John the Apostle
- The angels of the seven churches
- The members of the seven churches

The angel of the Lord is a heavenly being. He gives the message to John just as faithfully as Christ gave it to him.

The Apostle John receives the message from the angel and he passes it on unchanged to the angels of the churches. “Angel of the church” is another term for “elder of the church.” The Greek word which is translated as “angel”<sup>10</sup> also means “messenger.” The elders of the churches were messengers who received the message from John in a written form. They kept these parchments in their homes and read them to the members whenever there was a meeting. For them as readers, as well as to those who listened, the promise was given,

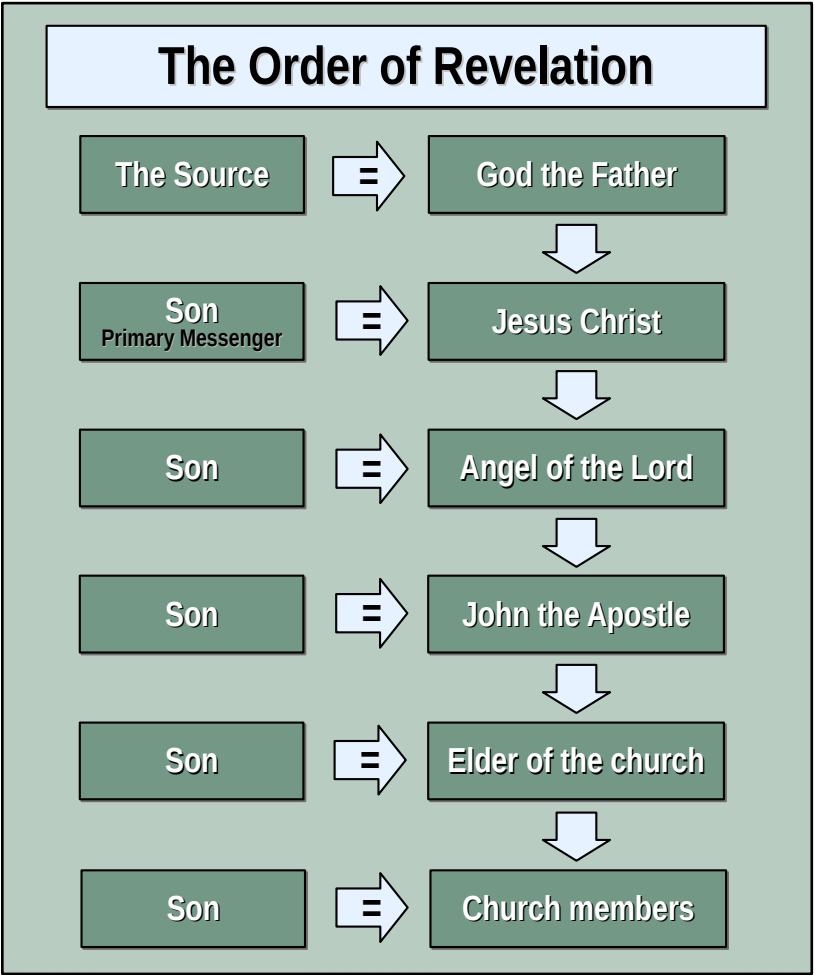
### **Revelation 1** [New Living Translation]

<sup>3</sup> God blesses the one who reads this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to it and obey what it says. For

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<sup>10</sup> Greek: *angelos*.

the time is near when these things will happen.



The role of the elder was indeed very humble. He was not free to give an interpretation to the reading. He was not permitted to add or take away anything.

**Revelation 22**

<sup>18</sup> For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

<sup>19</sup> And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of



this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

The elders were to read the message just as it was given to them. Only then could they claim the promise. In this way they were to be impressed, and we should also be impressed, with the importance of the role of a son, or messenger.

Paul understood the importance of the role of a son when he wrote:

### **Galatians 1**

<sup>8</sup> But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

<sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

## **The Great Challenge**

We might indeed ask, Who can be a faithful channel in all things? How easy it is to add to the facts of a case as we relate it to others! In many instances this is not even done on purpose. Then there is the problem of the imperfection of human language. It is not difficult for us to imagine that heavenly beings can be reliable channels. But how can God entrust His message to mere humans and know that they will pass it on reliably?

Actually, it is impossible for anyone to be a reliable channel unless he is not only a messenger by name, but also a son by nature. Only one who has the same nature as the Father knows what the Father wants and can represent the principles and interests of the Father. This is why Christ makes us partakers of His nature.

### **2 Peter 1**

<sup>4</sup> That through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

Whoever has become a son of Christ through the rebirth experience can also be His messenger. But like every son, we too must grow in this role. It is a great privilege to be partakers of Christ's nature. Every victory over sin that Christ achieved is our victory.

Satan puts all his efforts into preventing us from fulfilling the role of a son. There is nothing that he fears so much as the true gospel being preached at the right time, in the right place, and in the right way. Sometimes it may seem as though we can no longer fill the role of a son. But Jesus has made it possible for us to remain sons under all circumstances. His faithfulness as the Son has opened the door for us to be faithful in this role no matter how strong Satan's challenge may be.

The great conflict, and also the victory, came for Jesus Christ immediately after His baptism and anointing as the Son. Of this occasion we read,

### **Matthew 3**

<sup>16</sup> When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

<sup>17</sup> And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In these words the Father testified to the nature and the role of the Son. Not only that, He also declared that He was responsible for the Son. Through these words Christ was strengthened for the task that lay ahead of Him. In harmony with the statement of His Father, the Son allowed Himself to be led wherever the Father wanted Him to be.

### **Matthew 4**

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

In the wilderness Jesus had nothing to eat and no fellowship

with others. But He used this opportunity for prayer and to strengthen His faith because He knew that the coming battle would be extremely difficult. However, as the days passed and time wore on His Father did not seem to be concerned that His Son was becoming increasingly famished.

<sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

From our limited point of view it seems incomprehensible that a father should give his son nothing to eat for forty days. And yet God was fulfilling His role as the Father perfectly. It is thoroughly in keeping with the role of a father that he sometimes does not give his son what the son wishes. This lesson is necessary in order for the son to learn obedience and trust, as the following words clearly show.

### **Deuteronomy 8**

<sup>3</sup> So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

This text does not say

“He allowed you to die from hunger”

but,

“He allowed you to hunger, and fed you.”

This hunger has a specific purpose. It shows us that appetite must be controlled. If we do not keep within the God-given limits of appetite then the blessing of food will be of no use to us. The history of humanity shows that uncontrolled appetite leads to the ruin of our race. The Lord gave our first parents this lesson in the garden of Eden.

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow

that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

The trees from which Adam and Eve were permitted to eat, and especially the tree of life, revealed the loving care of the Father who provides His children with everything they need to live. Even the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was proof of His Fatherly care. By this means He showed His children that there is a limit to appetite. By providing this tree God in effect allowed us to hunger.

Humanity had to learn the limits of appetite, so that the food from the tree of life, as well as from the other trees, would be a blessing. This was not even a difficult test for Adam because he was created without any inclination to sin. However, Satan was successful in getting him to leave his position as a son.

Eve first became an unreliable channel when she stood by the tree of knowledge—the place which she should have avoided at all costs as a faithful son or daughter. Seemingly conscientious, she repeated the words of the Lord:

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>3</sup> But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

However, this was neither the right place to pass on God's message, nor was it even the right message. God had said,

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

In the first place, God had said nothing about touching the

fruit but only of eating it. Secondly, God had declared that they would certainly die if they ate of the fruit, whereas Eve said that they might die.<sup>11</sup>

By the time Eve came to her husband to give him some of the “good” fruit, which was supposed to make them wise, she was an absolutely unreliable channel. She was no longer filling the role of a son in the least way, but instead spoke “words of men” or “idle tales.” Adam also left his position as a son when he accepted Eve’s message and ate of the fruit.

It was because Adam and Eve went beyond the limits of appetite that they left their roles as sons and daughters of God. And therefore it was on this very point that Christ was tested and had to stand firm.

Like the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden, and the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness who hungered and were fed with manna, so Jesus’ fast was also a part of the loving care of the Father. Jesus had to learn that there is a limit to appetite.

However, His test was much greater than that of Adam and Eve’s, or even of the Israelites’ in the wilderness. Why was this so? Simply because uncontrolled appetite had become so embedded in human nature by this time that it required the most extreme measures to learn this lesson in all its depth. If we were to look upon uncontrolled appetite as a terminal disease, then Jesus’ fast was the therapy prescribed to cure this sickness.

Would we not accept a forty-day fast if we knew that it would deliver us from a fatal disease? Naturally we would accept such a measure, and we would not consider the cure as cruel but as a life-saver. We would also be grateful to the doc-

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<sup>11</sup> Hebrew (*pen*), implies that what follows is only a possibility and not a certainty. Eve’s statement reflected her understanding that God’s word was a threat and not simply an explanation of the sure results of transgression.

tor who gave us the prescription for such treatment.

Jesus went through this treatment for us and in this way provided the means by which we can be delivered from the fatal disease of appetite. We do not need to fast for forty days, but simply claim His victory for ourselves. And we should be very grateful to our Father for prescribing this treatment for the Son of man, for it delivers us from a lethal sickness.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 122-123:**

In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome.

It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. "Be of good cheer," He says, "I have overcome the world." *John* 16:33.

Let him who is struggling against the power of appetite look to the Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. See Him in His agony upon the cross, as He exclaimed, "I thirst." He has endured all that it is possible for us to bear. His victory is ours.

The idea that the cure for appetite which the Father prescribed was an unnecessary evil comes from the enemy of God and man. In the wilderness he drew near to the Son of God and questioned His Sonship.

**Matthew 4**

<sup>3</sup> If you are the Son of God...

In other words:

"If you were the Son of God your Father would take care of you!"

The Father was providing His Son with the best therapy possible, but the enemy wanted to disrupt the treatment by making it appear unreasonable. He said that such a therapy could never come from the Father. He urged Jesus to intervene and indicated that He needed to give proof of His position as a Son by stopping the cruel treatment. If He did so then His Father would help Him.

#### **Matthew 4**

<sup>3</sup> If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

Satan presented Christ with a tremendous challenge. The witness of sight and circumstance seemed to confirm the words of the tempter, who did not appear before Christ as Satan but as an angel of light. Jesus' life was seriously threatened although His public ministry had only just begun! The Son's work was not yet finished. Perhaps the therapy against the fatal appetite was too extreme? Perhaps Jesus had misunderstood His Father's plan. The enemy of souls tried to imbue Him with these thoughts.

#### **The Desire of Ages, p. 119:**

Not without a struggle could Jesus listen in silence to the arch-deceiver.

But what would such an independent act of procuring food mean? Jesus would have deviated from the principle that:

#### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> The Son can do nothing of Himself.

In other words, Jesus would have relinquished His role as the Son of God. If He had tried to prove His lineage in this way it would no longer have been the revelation "which God gave Him." Such an act would have been His own message at the wrong place and at the wrong time. Jesus saw this very clearly.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 119:**

But the Son of God was not to prove His divinity to Satan, or to explain the reason of His humiliation. By conceding to the demands of the rebel, nothing for the good of man or the glory of God would be gained. Had Christ complied with the suggestion of the enemy, Satan would still have said, "Show me a sign that I may believe you to be the Son of God." Evidence would have been worthless to break the power of rebellion in his heart.

If Jesus had performed the suggested miracle, then He would also have ceased to be the Son of man, because a man is not able to make bread out of stones.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 119:**

And Christ was not to exercise divine power for His own benefit. He had come to bear trial as we must do, leaving us an example of faith and submission. Neither here nor at any subsequent time in His earthly life did He work a miracle in His own behalf. His wonderful works were all for the good of others.

Though Jesus recognized Satan from the beginning, He was not provoked to enter into controversy with him. Strengthened with the memory of the voice from heaven, He rested in His Father's love. He would not parley with temptation.

Jesus withstood the great temptation. He remained faithful to His role as the Son.

**Matthew 4**

<sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

By quoting these words Jesus expressed His understanding of the love of His Father. The Father was caring for Him. He would give Him exactly what He needed as the representative of humanity. Jesus lived by this word, and thus He gained the victory. He remained the Son of God, a reliable channel, the Primary Messenger, who brings us only that which comes



from God. It would have been more of a calamity than anything else for Him to leave His role as the Son—worse even than death.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 121:**

In the presence of the witnessing universe, He testified that it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from the will of God.

The Father cared for Jesus.

**Matthew 4**

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

And we too, as sons and daughters of Christ, must learn to stick faithfully to the Word of God as Jesus did. We must come to the point where we ask only two questions:

1. What is God's will?
2. What has He promised us?

**The Desire of Ages, p. 121:**

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions.

But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God.

**Matthew 6**

<sup>33</sup> Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God's command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other.

## Two Love Gifts from the Father for the Son

Food



The tree of life  
Manna  
Angels ministered to Jesus



Provision

Hunger



The tree of knowledge  
Israel in the wilderness  
Jesus in the wilderness



Knowledge of the  
limits of appetite

**The role of the son is to unconditionally accept  
both love gifts from the Father.  
Only then can he be a true channel.**

Even though our trials are less than those of our Saviour's, we are tempted to give up our sonship in exactly the same way. The greatest challenge of all still lies ahead of us.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 121:**

In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. See *Revelation* 13:11-17.

But to the obedient is given the promise,

#### **Isaiah 33**

<sup>16</sup> He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

By this promise the children of God will live. When the earth shall be wasted with famine, they shall be fed.

### **Psalm 37**

<sup>19</sup> They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

To that time of distress the prophet Habakkuk looked forward, and his words express the faith of the church:

### **Habakkuk 3**

<sup>17</sup> Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

<sup>18</sup> Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 123:<sup>12</sup>**

Every promise in God's word is ours. "By every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" are we to live. When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours. Says the psalmist,

### **Psalm 119**

<sup>11</sup> Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

### **Psalm 17**

<sup>4</sup> By the word of your lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer.

That is the role of the son. He goes only where God sends him, says only what God tells him, says it only when God commands him to do so, and says it only in the way the Father wants him to. He does all this no matter what the costs to himself may be.

That is Gospel Order, and the church that builds on this order cannot be overcome by the gates of hell.

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<sup>12</sup> See *The Desire of Ages*, Chapter 12, "The Temptation", for further study.



## 5. The Revelation of the Treasure

### 2 Corinthians 4

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels...

WITH these words Paul describes the mystery of God which was revealed in Jesus, the Son of the living God. The treasure is the divine nature, the earthen vessel is the human nature. The entire system of Gospel Order is built on the principle of divinity dwelling within humanity.

### A Hidden Treasure

An earthen<sup>13</sup> vessel is made out of clay, and the word “earthen” refers especially to the temporal nature or low value of the vessel. The only thing that makes the vessel valuable is the treasure, but that cannot be seen by human eyes. The vessel itself is often rejected because of its apparent worthlessness, but such a step leads to the loss of the treasure as well.

The divine nature of Christ is the treasure that was hidden within His human nature—the earthen vessel. Therefore, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden there too, as Paul writes:

### Colossians 2

<sup>2</sup> ...the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

<sup>3</sup> In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

We could use the word “concealed”<sup>14</sup> or “disguised” instead of “hidden.” The treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge are hidden within the earthen vessel of humanity. Jesus’ contemporaries did not recognize the invaluable treasure that lay hidden within His plain exterior. This is revealed in the way they judged Him. When the disciples were asked,

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<sup>13</sup> Greek: (*ostrakinos*) means “earthen” or “like clay.”

<sup>14</sup> The Greek word for “hidden” in *Colossians* 2:3 is *apokryphos*, which infers this meaning. It is translated as “secret, concealed, hidden away, kept secret, disguised.”

## **Matthew 16**

<sup>13</sup> Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

They answered,

<sup>14</sup> Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

Their answers show that Jesus was generally regarded as a remarkable person, but that the treasure of His divine nature went unrecognized. In contrast to this Peter clearly confessed:

<sup>16</sup> You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Jesus emphasized the importance of this knowledge by pointing to its Source:

<sup>17</sup> Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And then He added:

<sup>18</sup> On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Jesus was obviously concerned that His disciples should grasp the importance of this confession. Up to this point they had not understood His divinity, because they too found it difficult to recognize the treasure in the earthen vessel.

We humans often make the mistake of looking to the vessel instead of seeing the treasure. And this phenomenon is not restricted to the spiritual realm. How many people have been despised because society did not recognize their talents! It was not until following generations realized they were geni, that acclamations of praise and honor were heaped upon them posthumously, which did not benefit the dead.

Neither did it benefit those who recognized the talents, for they were none the wiser. True gifts are seldom recognized as such in the living, while those who are thought to possess them often do not. It is only much later, when the fruits begin

to appear, that the valuable and true are recognized, and those who boasted of their gifts often prove to be destitute, even if they were praised by the people of their time.

The same tendency can also be seen in spiritual matters.

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

<sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

<sup>28</sup> And the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

But never did the treasure receive so little recognition as in the life of the Saviour. He was the Light of the world, the Light that illumines all people. But He was despised to such an extent that He was finally nailed to the cross. The people of that time continued their unreasonable rejection of Him until they were finally filled with hatred and came under the full control of Satan.

Jesus appeared to be just an ordinary person to them, therefore they asked Him to give a visible sign as proof of His divine mission. Despite all the manifestations of divine power He had already given them, He was often challenged,

### **John 2**

<sup>18</sup> What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?

Jesus saw through their guise, and He answered,

### **John 4**

<sup>48</sup> Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.

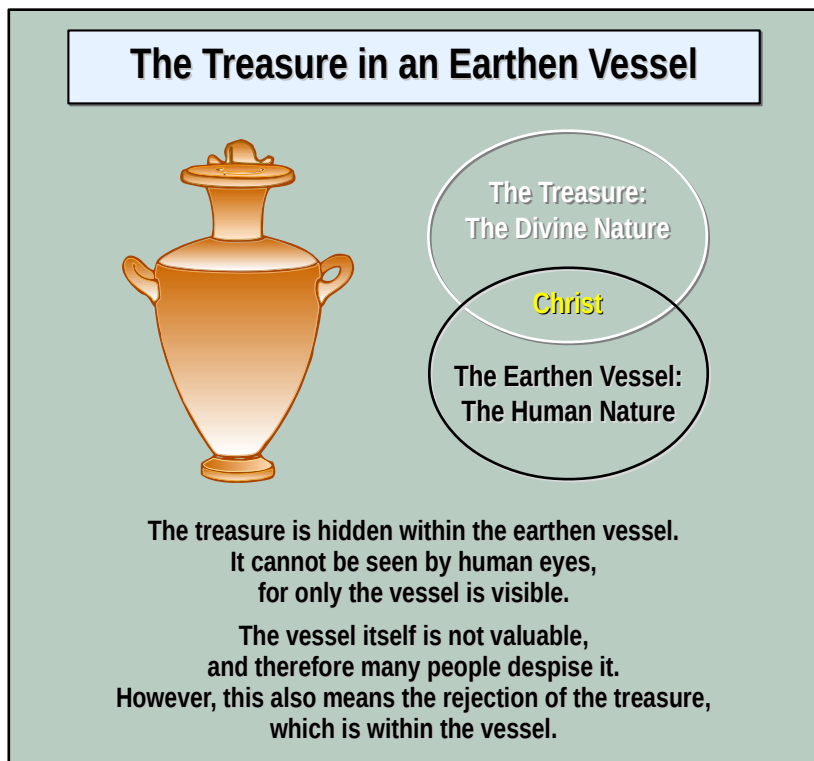
He made this statement to the Jewish nobleman whose son lay dying at home. The man had come to the Saviour in his

distress, but he did not expect what he saw—a mere earthen vessel. Instead he was looking for a treasure that he would recognize at first sight.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 197:**

On reaching Cana he found a throng surrounding Jesus. With an anxious heart he pressed through to the Saviour's presence. His faith faltered when he saw only a plainly dressed man, dusty and worn with travel. He doubted that this Person could do what he had come to ask of Him.

The “plainly dressed man, dusty and worn with travel” was the earthen vessel. The hidden, concealed treasure was not visible. How could it be seen at all then? What means did God provide so that the people could recognize the treasure?



While John the Baptist was in prison he greatly desired to



see the treasure. He sent messengers to Jesus with the question,

#### **Luke 7**

<sup>19</sup> Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?

Jesus understood his great longing and gave him an answer, without using words, which revealed the treasure.

#### **Luke 7**

<sup>21</sup> And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.

John understood the answer and rejoiced over the treasure. He saw the divine nature that was revealed in Jesus' character. He recognized that this very character had been prophesied in the Old Testament in describing the Messiah.

#### **Isaiah 61**

<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

<sup>2</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

#### **The Desire of Ages, p. 217:**

The evidence of His divinity was seen in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity. His glory was shown in His condescension to our low estate.

#### **The Desire of Ages, p. 406-407:**

Every miracle that Christ performed was a sign of His divinity. He was doing the very work that had been foretold of the Messiah; but to the Pharisees these works of mercy were a positive offense. The Jewish leaders looked with heartless indifference on human suffering. In many cases their selfish-

ness and oppression had caused the affliction that Christ relieved. Thus His miracles were to them a reproach.

That which led the Jews to reject the Saviour's work was the highest evidence of His divine character. The greatest significance of His miracles is seen in the fact that they were for the blessing of humanity. The highest evidence that He came from God is that His life revealed the character of God. He did the works and spoke the words of God. Such a life is the greatest of all miracles.

When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees. He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan's insinuations. He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride.

But the gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan? Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. When one who has been controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God's heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth.

Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled,

**Ezekiel 36**

<sup>26</sup> A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.

The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls.

A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son.

Unfortunately, this witness is seldom accepted.

### **John 1**

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

<sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Jesus warned of the human tendency to despise the treasure in the following words:

### **Mark 6**

<sup>4</sup> A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 196:**

But the people of Nazareth did not believe on Him. For this reason, Jesus did not visit Nazareth on His way to Cana. The Saviour declared to His disciples that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

Men estimate character by that which they themselves are capable of appreciating. The narrow and worldly-minded judged of Christ by His humble birth, His lowly garb, and daily toil. They could not appreciate the purity of that spirit upon which was no stain of sin.

Since it is absolutely necessary for us to recognize this treasure, God has provided a means of making it visible. The Scriptures call this way, or procedure, “revelation.”

## **By Revelation**

Gospel Order is inseparably linked to divine revelation. If there were no revelation there could be no Gospel Order. Therefore it is written,

### **Proverbs 29**

<sup>18</sup> Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.

An example of the rejection of revelation resulting in a lack of Gospel Order is the condition of Israel during the period of the judges, when Eli was the high priest and judge. *1 Samuel*

2:12-17. Eli's sons were very unfaithful, and through their ministry at the sanctuary the ordinances in Israel became more and more corrupt. The cause of this disorder was the rejection of the treasure that comes through revelation.

### **1 Samuel 3**

<sup>1</sup> The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

Paul also pointed out the importance of revelation. Like Christ, he had many opponents who looked to the earthen vessel to justify their rejection of the message. These circumstances constrained him to direct their attention to the treasure within the earthen vessel. In giving a reason for the authority of his message, Paul plainly and clearly states that it was given by revelation.

### **Ephesians 3**

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—

<sup>2</sup> If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

<sup>3</sup> How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery.

Paul did not write these words in order to attract honor to himself. He was not concerned with promoting his own interests, for he was very modest. But the apostle found it necessary to point out the origin of his message to the church, so that they would accept it and benefit from it. In his letter to the Corinthian church Paul clearly showed the difference between the treasure and the vessel.

### **2 Corinthians 4**

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

<sup>10</sup> Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward

man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

## **2 Corinthians 5**

<sup>1</sup> For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Paul openly admitted that he was only a weak, fragile vessel. For example, in his letter to the Galatians he wrote:

## **Galatians 4**

<sup>13</sup> You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.

This church had originally seen the treasure in the earthen vessel, but they were later deceived and lost sight of it. Therefore Paul found it necessary to write to them:

## **Galatians 1**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead);

<sup>11</sup> But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

<sup>12</sup> For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul contrasts the revelation he was given with that which comes “according to man” in order to show that his message came from God. No one can discover God’s message. It comes only by revelation and is perfect, contains no mistakes and reliably foretells future events; it is infinitely deep, and yet can be understood by all who want to understand; it meets the precise needs of the receiver, and is the only message that actually changes lives.

## **2 Timothy 3**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

<sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

## **2 Peter 1**

<sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

<sup>21</sup> For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

## **1 Corinthians 2**

<sup>13</sup> These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

## **1 Thessalonians 2**

<sup>13</sup> For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

How can we describe the way, or procedure, of revelation? The first condition has already been mentioned—God must be the Source of the message. In other words, only He decides what is to be imparted, through whom it will be given, at what time, where, and in what way. Secondly, God has different ways of imparting His message to His messengers.

## **Hebrews 1**

<sup>1</sup> God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

<sup>2</sup> Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...

## **Face to Face**

In the Word of God we find many instances where God spoke directly to the human instrument. While Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, the Lord visited them and spoke to them directly.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

It was God's intention to speak to all their descendants through the first couple. We also read that the Lord spoke directly with the patriarch Abraham.

### **Genesis 18**

<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

<sup>2</sup> So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him.

The Lord spoke with Moses in the same manner.

### **Numbers 12**

<sup>7</sup> Not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house.

<sup>8</sup> I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

### **The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1099:**

It will baffle the keenest intellect to interpret the divine manifestation of the burning bush. It was not a dream; it was not a vision; it was a living reality,—something that Moses saw with his eyes. He heard the voice of God calling to him out of the bush, and he covered his face, realizing that he stood in the immediate presence of God. God was conversing with humanity.

Never could Moses describe the impression made upon his mind by the sight he then saw, and by the sound of the voice that spoke to him; but this impression was never effaced. Heaven came very near to him as, with reverent awe, he listened to the words, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." What wondrous condescension for God to leave the heavenly courts, and manifest Himself to Moses, talking with him face to face, "as a man speaks unto his friend."

God spoke directly with Moses again on Mount Sinai.

### **Acts 7**

<sup>38</sup> This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.

Joshua also saw the Lord and conversed with Him.

### **Joshua 5**

<sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Are you for us, or for our adversaries?

<sup>14</sup> And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto Him, What says my lord unto His servant?

<sup>15</sup> And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose your shoe from off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.

Further examples of this direct method of communication where God spoke face to face with people can be found during Jesus' earthly sojourn. The voice of God was directly heard three times. The first was at Jesus' baptism, of which we read,

### **Matthew 3**

<sup>17</sup> And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Apart from Christ, other people heard this voice as well. On the mount of transfiguration<sup>15</sup> God repeated these words. And in the temple He spoke again—this time to a large group, which also included some Greeks. *John* 12:20-30.

After Jesus had left the earth, Peter referred to this direct form of communication as proof of the authenticity of the

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<sup>15</sup> See *Matthew* 17:1-9; *Mark* 9:2-9; *Luke* 9:28-36.



message that the disciples preached:

## **2 Peter 1**

<sup>16</sup> For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

<sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

<sup>18</sup> And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

<sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

<sup>20</sup> Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

<sup>21</sup> For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

In this way, Peter excludes all human interference. He shows that the message comes through the human agent, but not from humans. The message is the treasure, and the human instrument is but the vessel.

## **By Visions**

Another way God reveals His message to people is through visions.

### **Genesis 15**

<sup>1</sup> After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.

### **Numbers 12**

<sup>6</sup> If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision.

In *Daniel* 10 we find a description of one such vision. Here we read that Daniel was given a vision while he was obviously in a conscious state. He did not just imagine it, but he actually saw real people. Even though the other men who

were with Daniel saw nothing, they were still influenced by the atmosphere of the divine Presence.

### **Daniel 10**

<sup>7</sup> And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

From Daniel's report we learn that the Holy Spirit obviously takes control of the bodily functions during a vision.

### **Daniel 10**

<sup>8</sup> Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength.

<sup>9</sup> Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

<sup>10</sup> Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.

<sup>16</sup> And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength.

<sup>17</sup> For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me.

<sup>18</sup> Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!

<sup>19</sup> So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.

Daniel had no strength of his own, nor did he breathe, yet he continued living because he was strengthened by the angel. Paul also gives us a detailed description of a divine message being given in a vision.

### **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>1</sup> I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

<sup>2</sup> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

<sup>3</sup> And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—

<sup>4</sup> How he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

But the giving of visions has not been restricted to the times when the books of the Bible were written. God has also given a special promise that He will use this form of communication in the last days.

### **Joel 2**

<sup>28</sup> And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

This Old Testament prophecy received a partial fulfillment at Pentecost (*Acts 2:16-21*), but Peter infers that this promise will reach a more complete fulfillment before the second advent of Christ.

### **Acts 3**

<sup>19</sup> So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

<sup>20</sup> And that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before.

The “times of refreshing” is the event foretold in *Joel 2:28*, which is immediately followed by the return of Christ to this earth:

### **Joel 2**

<sup>28</sup> And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

<sup>29</sup> And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in

those days will I pour out my spirit.

<sup>30</sup> And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

<sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

So then, we can expect that God will talk to people in visions during the last days just as He did to Abraham, Daniel, Paul, and many other prophets from the Bible times. One example of this is the revelations that were given to Ellen G. White. She also describes what a vision is.

**Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 36:**

As inquiries are frequently made as to my state in vision, and after I come out, I would say that when the Lord sees fit to give a vision, I am taken into the presence of Jesus and angels, and am entirely lost to earthly things. I can see no farther than the angel directs me. My attention is often directed to scenes transpiring upon earth.

At times I am carried far ahead into the future and shown what is to take place. Then again I am shown things as they have occurred in the past. After I come out of vision I do not at once remember all that I have seen, and the matter is not so clear before me until I write, then the scene rises before me as was presented in vision, and I can write with freedom.

Sometimes the things which I have seen are hid from me after I come out of vision, and I cannot call them to mind until I am brought before a company where that vision applies, then the things which I have seen come to my mind with force.

I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that He is pleased to have me relate or write them.

Her husband, James White, described her state while she was in vision in the following way:

**Life Incidents, p. 272:**

1. She is utterly unconscious of everything transpiring around her, as has been proved by the most rigid tests, but views herself as removed from this world, and in the presence of heavenly beings.

2. She does not breathe. During the entire period of her continuance in vision, which has at different times ranged from fifteen minutes to three hours, there is no breath, as has been repeatedly proved by pressing upon the chest, and by closing the mouth and nostrils.

3. Immediately on entering vision, her muscles become rigid, and joints fixed, so far as any external force can influence them. At the same time her movements and gestures, which are frequent, are free and graceful, and cannot be hindered nor controlled by the strongest person.

4. On coming out of vision, whether in the daytime or a well-lighted room at night, all is total darkness. Her power to distinguish even the most brilliant objects, held within a few inches of the eyes, returns but gradually, sometimes not being fully established for three hours. This has continued for the past twenty years; yet her eyesight is not in the least impaired, few persons having better than she now possesses.

The similarities to the descriptions given by Daniel and Paul are especially striking in this report. All the witnesses show in a remarkable way how completely free from human influence the message is transferred to the human instrument. The divine origin of such messages cannot be denied. It is a wonderful, precious treasure.

**By Dreams**

The Lord also passes on His messages through dreams.

**Joel 2**

<sup>28</sup> And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

## **Numbers 12**

<sup>6</sup> Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

These texts reveal that the Lord speaks through dreams as well as through visions. But not all dreams come from the Lord. This is a fact that is often overlooked. If someone claims that their dream is a divine revelation we should not always accept it as such, because there are three different origins of dreams.

The vast majority of dreams have nothing to do with divine revelation. We dream every night, even though we do not usually remember what we have dreamed. Although we cannot control our dreams while we are asleep, they are still a product of our minds. As such they are a means of searching into our minds, but not into the Spirit of God.

We might be very impressed by some of these common dreams, and this is surely God's purpose. We can get to know ourselves better through them, if we interpret them accurately. But we should beware of imparting too great an importance to them. And we should never equate them with visions that come from God's Spirit. The word of God refers to these dreams as being transitory and worthless, which shows their true value:

## **Job 20**

<sup>8</sup> He will fly away like a dream, and not be found; yes, he will be chased away like a vision of the night.

## **Isaiah 29**

<sup>7</sup> The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel, even all who fight against her and her fortress, and distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.

<sup>8</sup> It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, and look—he eats; but he awakes, and his soul is still empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams, and look—he drinks; but he awakes, and indeed he is faint, and his soul still craves: so

the multitude of all the nations shall be, who fight against Mount Zion.

Another kind of dream comes through Satan when he gains access to the human mind in order to influence it. Whoever surrenders to sin and resists the working of the Spirit of God comes under the power of evil spirits and Satan uses them as a medium to spread his messages. The supernatural impression that is created is intended to counterfeit divine inspiration. But the Lord has revealed how we can recognize these false dreams.

### **Deuteronomy 13**

<sup>1</sup> If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder,

<sup>2</sup> And the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go after other gods—which you have not known—and let us serve them,

<sup>3</sup> You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

<sup>4</sup> You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

These false dreams of satanic origin can be identified by the fact that they are not in harmony with the principles of God's word, even though they may contain predictions that come true. This shows that they are vessels that contain no treasure.

The word of God expressly warns against these kinds of false dreams. They are not only wrong, they are also dangerous because they lead us into wrong paths. In these last days Satan is using this method of propaganda more and more. We need to be on our guard against such counterfeits of God's ways.

God definitely gives His revelations through dreams, as He has quite clearly declared in His word. One of the most im-

portant dreams in the Old Testament is that of Jacob, while fleeing from his brother Esau.

### **Genesis 28**

<sup>11</sup> So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

<sup>12</sup> Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

<sup>13</sup> And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

<sup>14</sup> Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

<sup>15</sup> Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.

<sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.

<sup>17</sup> And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!

<sup>18</sup> Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.

<sup>19</sup> And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

Jacob's dream was certainly of divine origin and free of all human influence. On that evening of his flight as he lay down to rest, he was in no way confident about his future. Any normal dream would have been a nightmare. He was on the run, and had lost everything that was dear to him.

But the dream he was given depicted the very opposite of

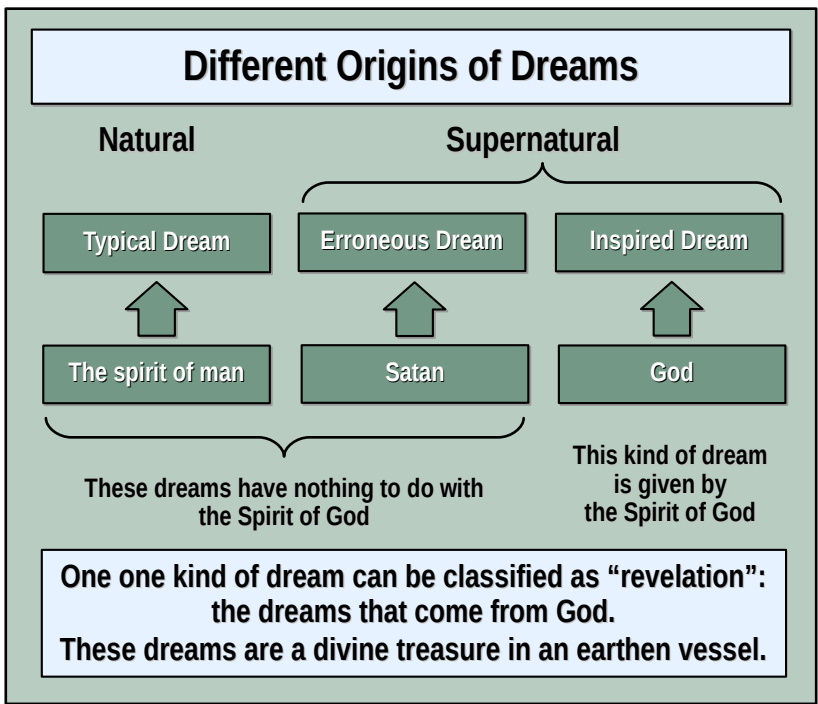


fear. It strengthened his faith, and revealed to future generations the mystery of the divine treasure in an earthen vessel. The ladder which Jacob saw in his dream was Christ, the Son of the living God.

**John 1**

<sup>51</sup> And He said to him, Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

The upper end of the ladder represented the divine nature of Christ and the lower end His human nature. This is the way that God’s heavenly messengers come down to humanity, to serve us.



God gave Jacob other dreams (*Genesis 31:10-11*), and He revealed Himself in dreams to Joseph (*Genesis 37:5*), one of Jacob’s sons, as well as to many other biblical characters. For

example, in the New Testament we read that God came close to Jesus' earthly father in a dream.

### **Matthew 1**

<sup>20</sup> But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Nor does God restrict Himself to communicating through dreams to only His believing children. Unbelievers have also come close to God in this way. Some examples are:

- Abimelech king of Gerar. *Genesis* 20:3-7.
- Pharaoh's butler and baker while they were in prison with Joseph. *Genesis* 40:1-20.
- Pharaoh himself had a God-given dream shortly after this. *Genesis* 41:1-36.
- One of the most well-known dreams is that of the image, which was given to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. *Daniel* 2.
- And in the New Testament we read of Pilate's wife being given a special dream from the Lord. *Matthew* 27:19.

Whenever God gave a dream to someone who was not His messenger it was always either a personal directive or it required an interpretation from the messenger of that time. If it was for personal instruction, then it was not intended to be passed on as present truth for God's people. If it was more than just personal instruction then God wanted to bring the recipient into contact with His people, who were to show him the way to heaven.

In other words, a person who has a divinely inspired dream is not automatically a messenger who has to pass on a message. In fact, quite the opposite is the case, for if someone has such a dream, and another interprets it, then the tasks are shared. This shows that the message has not originated in

someone's mind. The recipient of the dream senses that it is something special, but does not know the meaning of it. God's messenger is given the interpretation of it and in this way the Giver of the revelation is unquestionably identified.

#### **Genesis 40**

<sup>8</sup> And they said to him, We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. So Joseph said to them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.

#### **Genesis 41**

<sup>15</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.

<sup>16</sup> So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

#### **Daniel 2**

<sup>28</sup> But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.

Ellen White and other pioneers of the Advent movement also had dreams. Concerning these she wrote:

#### **Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 569:<sup>16</sup>**

I would call especial attention to the remarkable dreams given in this little work, all with harmony and distinctness illustrating the same things. The multitude of dreams arise from the common things of life, with which the Spirit of God has nothing to do. There are also false dreams, as well as false visions, which are inspired by the spirit of Satan.

But dreams from the Lord are classed in the word of God with visions and are as truly the fruits of the spirit of prophecy as visions. Such dreams, taking into the account the persons who have them and the circumstances under which they are given, contain their own proofs of their genuineness.

The messages contained in inspired dreams do not originate

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<sup>16</sup> See also "William Miller's Dream" in *Early Writings*, p. 81-83.

in the mind of man. They are the treasure, which is expressed through the earthen vessel of a human mind. Due to the weakness of the vessel, both the personality and the circumstances have to be taken into consideration when dreams are the means of communication. The relationship of these two factors to the message will be dealt with in more detail later.

## **Inspiring the Thoughts**

God also uses the thoughts, by inspiring and guiding them, to reveal Himself. As is the case with dreams, so it is with thoughts—the majority of them do not belong to the category of “revelation.” There are some who claim the opposite to be true, but they are only deceiving themselves. Even though we may be convinced about what we think, this does not mean that God has given us a revelation.

### **Proverbs 21 [New Living Translation]**

<sup>2</sup> People may think they are doing what is right, but the Lord examines the heart.

A revelation is a message from God, a truth that we cannot find out by ourselves.

### **1 Corinthians 2**

<sup>9</sup> Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

It is only when the thoughts bear this sign that we can speak of a revelation. Only then do we find a treasure hidden in an earthen vessel.

Of all the methods of revelation described so far, the way of guiding the thoughts is the most inconspicuous. But this is the method that God uses most often when He inspires His servants. If we find this fact surprising, let us remember that God usually reveals Himself in such unobtrusive ways.

### **1 Kings 19**

<sup>11</sup> Then He said, Go out, and stand on the mountain before

the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

<sup>12</sup> And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

<sup>13</sup> So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.

There are many examples in the Bible of how the Lord inspired His servants by guiding their thoughts. The gospel according to *Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, that Luke wrote, are both books that are certainly inspired by the Holy Spirit and provide us with a valuable revelation. But Luke makes no claims to having received the message through direct communication with heavenly beings, a vision, or a dream. Instead he simply writes,

### **Luke 1**

<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

<sup>2</sup> Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

<sup>3</sup> It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,

<sup>4</sup> That you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Paul also confirms that God guides the thoughts as a means of revelation. He writes,

### **1 Corinthians 7**

<sup>25</sup> Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.

<sup>40</sup> But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

These texts have often been misunderstood. Some have concluded that these are not inspired statements, but simply human opinion. If this were the case, then it could not be said that...

## **2 Timothy 3**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

When we consider the circumstances in which Paul wrote to the Corinthians we can see that his words really were inspired. In *1 Corinthians* 7 Paul refers to a statement made by Christ. Many of Jesus' words were engraved in the memories of the first Christians because they repeated them so often:

## **1 Corinthians 7**

<sup>10</sup> Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

Jesus had made a similar statement on the Mount of Blessings:

## **Matthew 5**

<sup>32</sup> But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

In his letter to the Corinthian believers, Paul was merely reiterating what Jesus had already revealed. But then he went further than that, on the basis that he was also an inspired apostle himself. When speaking about things that Jesus had not expressly said, Paul describes them as "my judgment." Here he is not referring to his own, personal, human opinion, but to his thoughts—inspired by the Holy Spirit—as he himself confirms.

The message contained in his statement is no less inspired than a message that comes through a vision or a dream. The fact that there was no direct statement from Christ for Paul to quote is not unusual, for revelation is a progressive process. It

is the light,

#### **Proverbs 4**

<sup>18</sup> That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

The apostle Paul testifies in several places that the Lord spoke to him by guiding his thoughts. For example,

#### **2 Corinthians 8**

<sup>10</sup> And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago.

Ellen White, who testified to having been given revelations through visions, was also inspired by the Spirit of God guiding her thoughts. She writes:

#### **Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 36:**

After I come out of vision I do not at once remember all that I have seen, and the matter is not so clear before me until I write, then the scene rises before me as was presented in vision, and I can write with freedom.

Sometimes the things which I have seen are hid from me after I come out of vision, and I cannot call them to mind until I am brought before a company where that vision applies, then the things which I have seen come to my mind with force.

I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that He is pleased to have me relate or write them.

Jesus confirmed this method of divine revelation and promised His disciples,

#### **Luke 12**

<sup>11</sup> Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.

<sup>12</sup> For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

In the case of inspiration through the guiding of thoughts we also need to realize that this does not necessarily mean that each divinely directed thought should be considered as present truth for God's people. There are many personal directions that God gives to His children in this way.

## **Different Degrees of Inspiration?**

When we compare the different ways and means that the Lord uses to pass on a revelation, we might wonder if there are different degrees of inspiration. In order to gain a correct understanding of Gospel Order, we need to know the answer to this question.

The Lord Himself makes a difference between His ways of inspiration when he says,

### **Numbers 12**

<sup>6</sup> Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

<sup>7</sup> Not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house.

<sup>8</sup> I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

Obviously the Lord was able to communicate more to His servant Moses than to Aaron and Miriam. Although they had the gift of prophecy, they still had to receive God's message from Moses. Similarly, God can communicate more to a person through visions than to another person through allegorical, symbolic dreams.

But although there are obviously differences in the amount and extent of communication, this does not imply that there is any difference in the degree of inspiration. If there were different degrees, the consequence would be that the less inspired messages would be considered of less importance than the message which came via a higher degree of inspiration.



Such a position is extremely dangerous because it would lead us into wrong paths.

It is not the vessel which is important, but the treasure, and that is equally precious regardless of its vessel. Wrong ideas about different degrees of inspiration have caused people to assume there is a difference between various books of the Bible, or Bible verses. But this is an unholy difference which obscures the treasure from sight and inevitably leads to a rejection of the divine message.

Irrespective of the way it is given to us, the divine message is an infinite treasure. It is holy ground on which we, like Moses, need to take off our shoes. In other words, we need to treat the message with the utmost respect. The channel through which the message is given is only the vessel. And we should never make the mistake of judging the treasure by the vessel.

## **2 Timothy 3**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

### **Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 23:**

Both in the (Battle Creek) Tabernacle and in the college the subject of inspiration has been taught, and finite men have taken it upon themselves to say that some things in the Scriptures were inspired and some were not. I was shown that the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the Review,<sup>17</sup> neither did He approve their endorsement before our youth in the college.

When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired. The testimonies have been treated in the same way; but God is not in

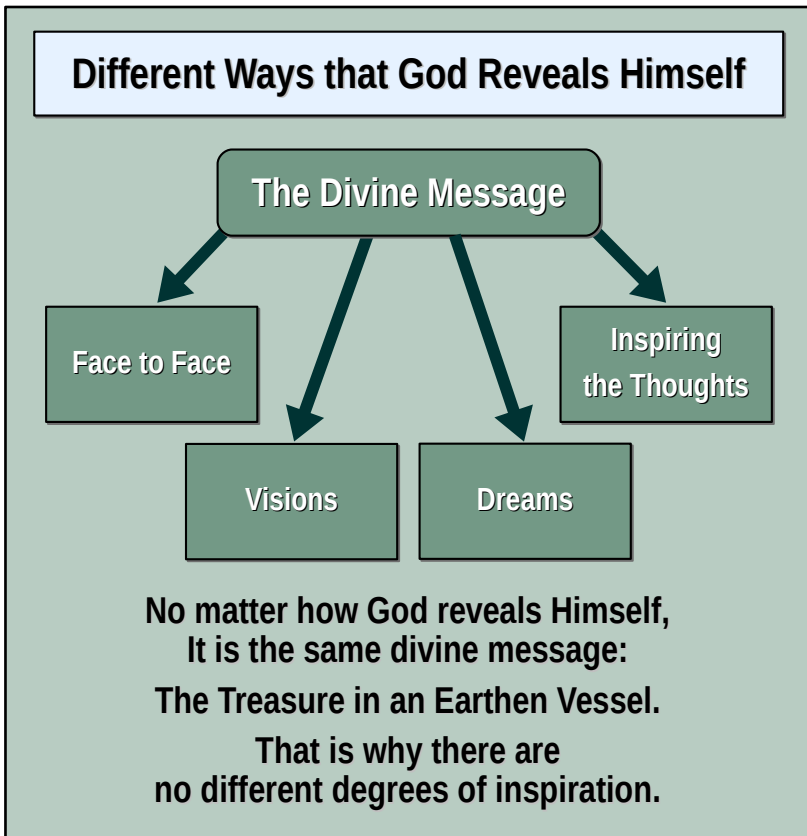
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<sup>17</sup> Reference here is to a series of articles, in which their author advocated that there were “differences in degrees” of inspiration. See *The Review and Herald*, Jan. 15, 1884.

this.

**The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 257:**

Brother B. is on the wrong track. God has not given the work into his hands to set up his human wisdom to put his hand on the sacred ark of God. When sitting in judgment upon the living oracles of God, did he consider that God had placed upon him the work to pass judgment as to what is inspired in the Word of God and what is not inspired? Has God committed the work to him to state what sort of degrees of inspiration attend some utterances and what is wanting in others? Whatever may be his thoughts in these things, if they are kept to himself they will not harm other souls.



It is therefore clear that we must reject the conclusion that there are different degrees of inspiration. It is God's prerogative to choose whichever way He desires to communicate His treasure. It is His choice, not ours. Our part is to accept the message in whatever form it comes to us.

But how, then, shall we understand the statement quoted earlier (*Numbers* 12:6-8), that the Lord can communicate more to the one with whom He speaks face to face?

Once we have learned to differentiate between the treasure and the vessel, the answer is very simple. The revelation is the treasure, and the person through whom the treasure comes is the vessel. Naturally, the person to whom God can speak directly is closer to Him than the one to whom He speaks indirectly. The Lord wants to come as close as possible to everyone, but the limitations of humanity, and often our lack of openness, are obstacles in His way. That is one reason why God has the different means of communication that we have already mentioned.

The question as to which method of communication God chooses depends not only on the messenger, but also on those who hear the message. We are given a remarkable illustration of this in the record of Moses coming down from the mount after speaking directly with God.

#### **Exodus 34**

<sup>29</sup> Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

<sup>30</sup> So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

<sup>31</sup> Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them.

<sup>32</sup> Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

<sup>33</sup> And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

<sup>34</sup> But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded.

<sup>35</sup> And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

It is quite apparent that in this case the Lord had to choose another form of communication, out of consideration for the people, from the way in which He spoke to the messenger. But no matter which way the Lord chooses, we need to learn to appreciate the treasure of divine revelation. If we all open our hearts to the Lord, then we shall all experience a closer relationship with Him.

## 6. The Treasure in an Earthen Vessel

**W**HEN Jesus lived on this earth most people did not recognize His divine nature—some did not want to acknowledge it and others were unable to see it. Once we have realized this, the question naturally arises as to why so few recognize the treasure within the earthen vessel.

We often judge the value of something according to the vessel in which it is presented. For example, no one would expect to find a valuable gift wrapped up in plain paper, or in banana leaves. And when the exterior wrapping is particularly ostentatious we assume that it contains something precious. But God does not work according to this principle. He deliberately chooses plain and simple vessels in which to hide His treasure.

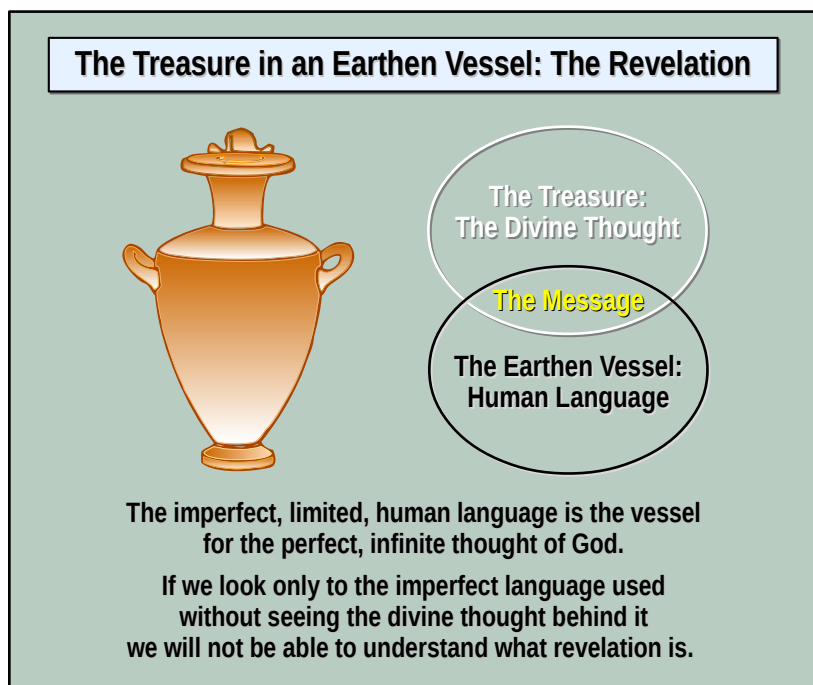
Another illustration is that of a talented musician who plays an instrument to show his skill. Such an artist would choose the best instrument available for this purpose. It is difficult to imagine a famous musician using a cheap instrument when performing at a large concert. But this is just what God has done. He is the greatest of all artists, and the instrument that He uses is not that of a glorious angel but sinful, human flesh.

### **The Language of the Bible**

In order to understand the process of revelation in greater depth we need to grasp this aspect of God's way of working. The message has a divine origin and therefore it is perfect and glorious, but the language in which it is given to humanity, and passed on to others, is weak and imperfect. This applies to the original language which the Bible was written in as well as to the various translations. The thoughts contained in the Bible were inspired by the Spirit of God, but the words were not.

Critics of the Bible often refer to the mistakes in grammar

and style, as well as errors in copying the texts, as proof that it cannot be inspired. But anyone who presents such arguments only shows that they do not understand the mystery of God.



By human logic alone we cannot grasp the fact that imperfect language can express a perfect thought. This is indeed a miracle of God's working. God is a Master Artist, and He is capable of performing a perfect work with an inferior instrument. He chooses His instrument Himself, and uses it in such a way that the divine thought reaches us reliably. Whoever desires to do so can understand the divine thoughts behind the words. But if we concentrate only on the vessel we will soon lose sight of the treasure.

As in many other areas, there are two extremes in regard to the question of the inspiration of the Bible. One extreme is that every single word of the Bible was inspired by the Holy

Spirit. In this view the writer is understood to be a kind of secretary who literally copies down what the Spirit of God dictates. It is easy to show the error in this approach. In the Bible we find several styles of writing, depending on the characteristics of the individual writers. For example, Peter writes that Paul's letters are, in part, difficult to understand.

## **2 Peter 3**

<sup>15</sup> As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

<sup>16</sup> As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

Anyone who knows Greek and has attempted to translate the apostle Paul's letters will concur with this statement. It is also easy to see that John has a very different style. The better we understand the nuances of language, the more clearly we see the differences in the styles of the various authors. But if the Holy Ghost had dictated every book of the Bible, there would be only one style throughout the whole volume.

The belief in a word-by-word inspiration of the Bible actually leads to a darkening of the biblical message. The treasure is lost sight of because only the vessel is considered. The same results can be seen when someone believes that Jesus had the perfect nature of Adam before he fell.

The other extreme is seen in those who do not believe in inspiration at all. As already described, they see only the imperfection of the vessel—the human element. They reject the divine origin of the Bible because this treasure is hidden in the weakness and imperfection of human language. In the same way many people have rejected Christ as the Son of God because He was a man who bore the weaknesses of fallen human nature.

The exponents of both extremes agree on one point—they

think that inspiration depends on the language in which the Bible was written. In other words, they concentrate on the vessel. But in doing so, they lose sight of the treasure.

### **The Great Controversy, p. v-vi:**

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all “given by inspiration of God” (2 *Timothy* 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

The Ten Commandments were spoken by God Himself, and were written by His own hand. They are of divine, and not of human composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” *John* 1:14.

Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another.

And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power



of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

**Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 15-16:**

Spiritual darkness has covered the earth and gross darkness the people. There are in many churches skepticism and infidelity in the interpretation of the Scriptures. Many, very many, are questioning the verity and truth of the Scriptures. Human reasoning and the imaginings of the human heart are undermining the inspiration of the Word of God, and that which should be received as granted, is surrounded with a cloud of mysticism. Nothing stands out in clear and distinct lines, upon rock bottom. This is one of the marked signs of the last days.

This Holy Book has withstood the assaults of Satan, who has united with evil men to make everything of divine character shrouded in clouds and darkness. But the Lord has preserved this Holy Book by His own miraculous power in its present shape—a chart or guidebook to the human family to show them the way to heaven.

But the oracles of God have been so manifestly neglected that there are but few in our world, even of those who profess to explain it to others, who have the divine knowledge of the Scriptures. There are learned men who have a college education, but these shepherds do not feed the flock of God.

They do not consider that the excellencies of the Scriptures will be continually unfolding their hidden treasures as precious jewels are discovered by digging for them....

Some look to us gravely and say, "Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?" This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God. Yes, they would just as easily stumble over plain facts that the common mind will accept, and discern the Divine, and to which God's utterance is plain and beautiful, full of marrow and fatness. All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth.

God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired Word to finite man. This Word, arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven.

**Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 20-22:**

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes.

The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases. Preconceptions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ....

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in

words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God....

The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought.

Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education. Sinful beings can only bear to look upon a shadow of the brightness of heaven's glory.

## **The Parables**

The parables in which Christ imparted spiritual truths also show how the treasure is embodied within an earthen vessel. In this we clearly see the process of revelation, which is the mystery of God.

A parable uses an earthen vessel which humanity is acquainted with, it is a story taken from daily life. And it was in stories like these that Jesus laid a treasure—a lesson—which was intended to be imparted through the parable.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 17:**

In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as

in His own mission to the world. That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.

...Natural things were the medium for the spiritual; the things of nature and the life-experience of His hearers were connected with the truths of the written word. Leading thus from the natural to the spiritual kingdom, Christ's parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God and earth with heaven.

A parable is merely an earthen vessel, and therefore it is weak and imperfect. Jesus commented on this weakness in the following words:

#### **Mark 4**

<sup>30</sup> To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?

With these words Jesus intimated that no earthly comparison can represent the glory and perfection of the kingdom of God.

### **The Parable of the Unjust Judge**

The imperfection of the earthen vessel is very apparent in the parable where the righteous God is compared with the unrighteous judge.

#### **Luke 18**

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said.

If we were to concentrate on the vessel without seeing that there is a treasure hidden within it, we would immediately come to the conclusion that the Lord of heaven is an unjust judge. Perhaps we would also question as to whether this

parable came from Christ at all, because He would surely not compare His Father with an unrighteous judge!

However, if we understand the mystery of God, we will search for, and find, the treasure in this vessel. And indeed, God's character is clearly depicted in this parable. The unjust judge finally helped the widow who brought her request to him, just as God helps us, although He is not unjust. Of Him we read,

### **James 1**

<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

How much more then, will our sympathizing Father help His children who bring Him their requests! The comparison given is by contrast, not by similarity. What confidence this parable gives to the children of God!

### **Luke 18**

<sup>7</sup> And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

Some other examples of "contrasting parables" which clearly elucidate the principle of the treasure in an earthly vessel are the parable of the unjust steward in *Luke 16:1-9*, and of the rich man and poor Lazarus in *Luke 16:19-31*. If we look only at the vessel, it is difficult to understand these parables.

But the Lord has hidden a treasure in them, and that is what we need to see. In fact if we take a closer look at all the parables of Jesus then we will see that each one demonstrates this principle of the treasure in an earthen vessel.

**The Treasure in an Earthen Vessel:  
The Parable of the Unjust Judge in *Luke 18:1-8***



The Treasure:  
The Divine Thought

The Message

The Earthen Vessel:  
Human Language

In this parable the character of God is clearly represented  
to all who want to understand it.

If the unjust judge was willing to help the widow,  
how much more is God willing to do so.

God is eager to help us:

“I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.”

If we look at the vessel alone,  
we will not recognize the treasure in this parable.

## Why an Earthen Vessel?

Why does the Lord hide His treasure in an earthen vessel? Would there not be less misunderstandings and rejection of the truth if God would show the treasure to the people right from the start? This was exactly what Jesus' critics thought when they came to Him with the challenge:

### Matthew 12

<sup>38</sup> Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.

But Jesus did not give them what they wanted because it would not have been good for them. If He had given it to them, they still would not have understood, as He Himself said,

## **Matthew 13**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

It is impossible for humanity, living in this sinful world, to see the full glory of the treasure. Therefore, in His love for us, God hides in an earthen vessel that which He cannot give us directly. In this way He can bring the treasure really close to us, until our weak eyes become accustomed to the sight.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 17:**

So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.

The word of God has been given for readers living at different times and coming from different nationalities. In order to come as close as possible to each person, the treasure has been wrapped in diverse earthen vessels. For example, Luke publicly declared that there were already several representations in written form of the life of the Lord Jesus. He writes,

### **Luke 1**

<sup>1</sup> Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

<sup>2</sup> Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us.

But the Holy Spirit obviously directed him to add another report to those already existing.

<sup>3</sup> It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.

It was obviously necessary for Theophilus to receive another report, especially written for him, as Luke says,

<sup>4</sup> ...that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

The Spirit of God not only decided for Theophilus but also for many others who had a similar need, that there should be another vessel in which the treasure was to be hidden.

**Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 21:**

There is variety in a tree, there are scarcely two leaves just alike. Yet this variety adds to the perfection of the tree as a whole.

In our Bible, we might ask, Why need Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Gospels, why need the Acts of the Apostles, and the variety of writers in the Epistles, go over the same thing?

The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their testimonies are brought together in one Book, and are like the testimonies in a social meeting. They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and this diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty.

The existence of a variety of vessels which contain the word of God clearly indicates the love of God, for He wants to come as close as possible to every person. In this way the gospel is not only preached to one generation, or one nation, but to every generation and every nation.

**Revelation 14**

<sup>6</sup> Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

**Yet Without Sin**

Some people go so far as to say that we must sin in order to reach sinners. But nothing could be more opposed to the word



of God! It is only as we are freed from sin that we can help those who are held captive to it.

#### **Hebrews 4**

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

This Bible verse clearly describes both the treasure and the vessel. Christ, the High Priest, is the treasure, and our weakness—human nature—is the vessel. Christ can sympathize with us because He has borne our weakness. This verse ends with the equally important assertion: “...yet without sin.”

God Himself chooses the vessel that can come as close as possible to us. Therefore, it must come from a sinful environment. But the Lord has nothing to do with sin. The mystery of God is the revelation of Himself in sinful flesh, but without sin. This is clearly expressed in the following verse:

#### **Romans 8**

<sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.

This means that although Christ bore our mortal, weak, sinful flesh He did not yield to sin, even by so much as a thought. He lived a life entirely without sin.

It would not have been possible for Christ to represent the mystery of God if He had sinned, because sin is, by definition, separation from God. When Christ bore our sins on the cross of Calvary He felt the separation from His heavenly Father. This caused Him to cry out:

#### **Matthew 27**

<sup>46</sup> My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

God cannot reveal Himself through sin because “every good gift and every perfect gift” comes from Him. And with Him,

## James 1

<sup>17</sup> ...there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Therefore, whoever claims that the mystery of God is revealed by sin is a liar.

## Matthew 7

<sup>15</sup> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

<sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

<sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

<sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

### The Vessel without the Divine Treasure



The Treasure:  
The Divine Nature

The Earthen Vessel:  
Sin

The divine cannot be hidden within sin  
because sin is separation from God.

The treasure cannot be found within this vessel.

## Luke 6

<sup>45</sup> A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his

heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

### **Proverbs 12**

<sup>16</sup> A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.

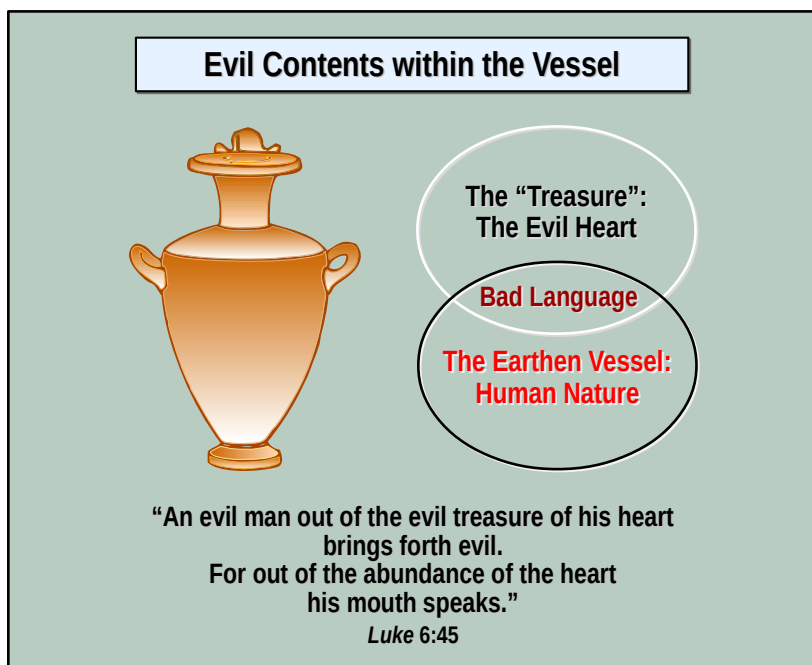
Evil speaking betrays the fact that we are not dealing with a good treasure but with an evil content. Such a person is not inspired by the Spirit of God but by their own sins.

### **James 1**

<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

<sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

<sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.



As we apply these principles to the process of revelation we

notice that God gives the treasure of His divine message through the agency of imperfect human language. But in doing so no bad words, doubtful suggestions, or even swearing, are used. The speech chosen to convey God's message will be polite and honest; it is a pure speech.

#### **Philippians 4**

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

#### **Education p. 235:**

The chief requisite of language is that it be pure and kind and true—the outward expression of an inward grace.

#### **John 7**

<sup>46</sup> The contemporaries of Christ were greatly impressed with His language. Even His opponents said, No man ever spoke like this Man!

#### **The Desire of Ages, p. 253:**

He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream. His voice was as music to those who had listened to the monotonous tones of the rabbis.

The speech of Jesus' disciples was also pure. Christ's influence on their words was noticeable.

#### **Acts 4**

<sup>13</sup> Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

#### **The Desire of Ages, p. 712:**

The disciples of Jesus were noted for the purity of their language.

## **Acts 2**

<sup>7</sup> Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?

<sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 821:**

The apostles and their associates were unlettered men, yet through the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, their speech, whether in their own or a foreign language, became pure, simple, and accurate, both in word and in accent.

Even when the followers of Christ are challenged, their speech will be calm and impartial. They will not defend self, and are ready to have their stand put to the test. When the disciples preached the message in the power of the Holy Spirit, they were challenged in a very prejudiced way:

## **Acts 2**

<sup>13</sup> Others mocking said, They are full of new wine.

But Peter answered this provocation calmly and objectively:

## **Acts 2**

<sup>14</sup> Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

<sup>15</sup> For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

<sup>16</sup> But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

### **Early Writings, p. 102:**

The servants of God who teach the truth should be men of judgment. They should be men who can bear opposition and not get excited; for those who oppose the truth will pick at those who teach it, and every objection that can be produced, will be brought in its worst form to bear against the truth. The servants of God who bear the message must be prepared to remove these objections, with calmness and meekness, by the light of truth.

Frequently opposers talk to ministers of God in a provoking manner, to call out something from them of the same na-

ture, that they can make as much of it as possible and declare to others that the teachers of the commandments have a bitter spirit and are harsh, as has been reported.

I saw that we must be prepared for objections, and with patience, judgment, and meekness, let them have the weight they deserve, not throw them away or dispose of them by positive assertions, and then bear down upon the objector, and manifest a hard spirit toward him; but give the objections their weight, then bring forth the light and the power of the truth, and let it outweigh and remove the errors.

Thus a good impression will be made, and honest opposers will acknowledge that they have been deceived and that the commandment keepers are not what they have been represented to be.

In the example of preaching the gospel we see very clearly that the earthen vessel may be simple, imperfect, and weak, and yet it still reveals an inward purity.

## **Practical Consequences**

What practical consequences arise for Gospel Order from this principle of placing the treasure in an earthen vessel?

The Jews rejected the Son of God because He came in a vessel that they did not expect—they wanted a vessel that would be more acceptable to them. Because Christ did not meet their expectations they rejected the Treasure and the vessel. We should learn from their experience that it is not our task to choose the vessel, but God’s alone. No one can influence God’s choice. When some of the Pharisees tried to do this very thing Jesus said to them,

### **Luke 19**

<sup>40</sup> I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.

In other words:

“If you are bothered about praise coming from such simple vessels as these children, then how surprised you would be if

it should come from mere stones. I can choose whatever messengers I wish.”

The Lord does not choose what we would normally choose.

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

<sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

<sup>28</sup> And the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

### **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>9</sup> For my strength is made perfect in weakness.

## **The Treasure in the Field**

No matter which vessel the Lord chooses, we must accept it for the sake of the treasure within. Jesus explained this principle in a parable:

### **Matthew 13**

<sup>44</sup> Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

During earlier times when there was no banking system, people often secured their treasure by burying it. If no one else knew of the hiding place, when the owner of the valuables died the treasure remained hidden until someone discovered it. A man who had rented a field found just such a treasure as he was plowing the earth. His friends must have thought him crazy when he sold everything he had to buy the field, without giving any explanation. But the man knew what he was doing. He bought the field because of the treasure it contained.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See *Christ's Object Lessons*, Chapter 8: "Hidden Treasure".

Similarly, we too should accept the vessel with all our hearts for the sake of the treasure, and this means that we must surrender our own opinions and concepts. Whoever accepts the vessel in this way also accepts the treasure. Whoever rejects the vessel also rejects the treasure hidden within it. Whoever accepts the messenger accepts him for Christ's sake, and whoever rejects him rejects Christ.

### **Matthew 10**

<sup>40</sup> He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives Him who sent me.

<sup>41</sup> He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

<sup>42</sup> And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.

### **Testimonies to Ministers, p. 97:**

If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ.

### **The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1089:**

We look upon the Jews as inexcusable because they rejected and crucified Christ. But today the messages that the Lord sends are often received in a manner similar to the way in which the Jews received Christ's message. If the instruction of the Lord does not harmonize with the opinions of men, anger takes control of reason, and men play into the enemy's hands by opposing the message that God sends. Satan uses them as sharp instruments to oppose the progress of truth.

After the ascension of Christ the disciples bitterly reproached themselves for not having really appreciated the treasure in the field during their three and a half years with Jesus. Today we too need to ask ourselves,

“Do we appreciate Him as we should?”



## The Treasure in an Earthen Vessel



The Treasure  
Hidden in the Field

The Revelation  
of the Treasure

The Earthen Vessel:  
The Field

The man had to buy the field  
in order to bring the treasure into his possession.

Likewise, we must give up our own concepts  
and accept the earthen vessel  
to gain the treasure—Christ.

## The Parable of the Sower

The question of our appreciation of the treasure is also dealt with in the parable of the sower.

### Matthew 13

<sup>3</sup> Behold, a sower went out to sow.

<sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

<sup>5</sup> Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

<sup>6</sup> But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

<sup>7</sup> And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

<sup>8</sup> But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

<sup>9</sup> He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

In this parable the treasure is the seed—the preaching of the truth. The sower sows the seed. In other words, the sower is the messenger, the vessel that is used to bring the seed to the listeners. But another vessel is mentioned here as well—the people who hear the truth. This parable shows in a convincing way what the appreciation of the treasure means: to give up everything so that we can be useful vessels in which the treasure of truth can grow.

<sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

If we do not understand a message we should not blame the messenger, but ask ourselves whether the cause might be that our own hearts are not ready for the treasure. The disciples did not understand the truth that Jesus preached because they had a hard-trodden path of wrong concepts. But instead of allowing the birds to peck the seeds away, they came to Jesus because they wanted to understand.

### **Luke 8**

<sup>9</sup> Then His disciples asked Him, saying, What does this parable mean?

In other words, the disciples appreciated the treasure so much that they were willing for the vessel—their own understanding—to be worked upon. Unfortunately, very few people react in such a way. Many react very superficially and immediately reject what they in reality do not understand, because it does not fit into their preconceived ideas. They prefer to criticize the messenger rather than their own understanding, and in this way everything that the Holy Spirit brings to them is pecked away.

### **Matthew 13**

<sup>20</sup> But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet

he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while.

<sup>21</sup> For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

The stony ground is a vessel that does not keep the seed of truth for long. If we depend on our own strength instead of the grace gained through communion with the Saviour, we will not retain the impression that the truth made for long. The stones are self—our own works.

At first the treasure of the truth is received with joy. People are as impressed with it as Simon Magus was. *Acts 8:4-24*. But it is not the love of truth that makes them so glad as much as the desire to use it, for instance to gain prestige and fame through the truth. When the opposite occurs then it soon becomes apparent that the treasure is not really appreciated.

#### **Mark 4**

<sup>18</sup> Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,

<sup>19</sup> And the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

When the vessel is already full, there is no room for the treasure. The weeds and thorns prevent the true treasure from taking root. Therefore the vessel must first be emptied. We can give the cares of this world to the Saviour, and we should give up the deception of riches by giving our means for the support of God's work. The desire for pleasure, that damages the vessel, must be uprooted. Even when we receive the treasure of truth with a pure heart we still need to take care that bad seeds, which would corrupt the treasure, do not find their way in again.

Since we are vessels for the holy truth, and our bodies are a temple for the Holy Spirit, we will take good care of this temple if we really appreciate the treasure.

## **1 Corinthians 6**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

<sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

This includes adopting a healthy lifestyle in regard to diet, dress, and many other things. Basically, Gospel Order is an appreciation of the treasure that God has given.

## **Caring for the Vessel**

As a Man, our Saviour also gave an example of caring for the vessel. Not only was His speech pure, but His clothing, His body, and everything that He was responsible for were also pure. This was so characteristic of Him that His disciples even recognized Him by it.

On the resurrection morning, before the disciples knew what had happened to the body of their Lord, they did not remember His words concerning His resurrection, and therefore they supposed that thieves had stolen His body.

But John realized that Jesus had risen because of a certain feature. It was only a minor thing, but it was a sign that Jesus honored the vessel for the sake of the treasure. His grave-clothes had not been carelessly thrown into a corner but had been neatly folded together.

## **John 20**

<sup>1</sup> Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.

<sup>3</sup> Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb.

<sup>4</sup> So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Pe-

ter and came to the tomb first.

<sup>5</sup> And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in.

<sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there,

<sup>7</sup> And the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but *folded together in a place by itself*.

<sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and *he saw and believed*.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 789:**

The disciples hurried to the tomb, and found it as Mary had said. They saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord. Yet even here was testimony that He had risen. The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John “saw, and believed.” He did not yet understand the scripture that Christ must rise from the dead; but he now remembered the Saviour’s words foretelling His resurrection.

It was Christ Himself who had placed those graveclothes with such care. When the mighty angel came down to the tomb, he was joined by another, who with his company had been keeping guard over the Lord’s body. As the angel from heaven rolled away the stone, the other entered the tomb, and unbound the wrappings from the body of Jesus. But it was the Saviour’s hand that folded each, and laid it in its place. In His sight who guides alike the star and the atom, there is nothing unimportant. Order and perfection are seen in all His work.

In all the examples of the seed that we have looked at, it is apparent that the problems lay neither with the seed nor with the sower. Instead, the problem lay in the vessel—the ground—into which the treasure was intended to enter. We have no influence over the sower, whom God alone chooses. Neither do we have any influence over the truth that is preached. This too is solely God’s responsibility. But we do have an influence on the ground that the seed falls onto. It is true that we can-

not change ourselves, but we can be willing to be changed. That is our decision.

### **Matthew 13**

<sup>23</sup> But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

### **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 59:<sup>19</sup>**

The good-ground hearer receives the word “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.” *1 Thessalonians* 2:13. Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself is a true learner. He trembles at the word; for to him it is a living reality. He opens his understanding and his heart to receive it. Such hearers were Cornelius and his friends, who said to the apostle Peter,

### **Acts 10**

<sup>33</sup> Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God.

The parable of the sower plainly shows that we bear a decisive responsibility in the care of our own vessels.

## **Appreciating the Vessel**

We also need to appreciate the vessel, no matter what it may be, that brings us the truth because it brings us the treasure. Christ chooses simple vessels, those that are usually despised by people. What lesson do we need to learn from this?

The Lord desires our attention to be directed to the treasure, and not to the vessel. It is not the vessel that deserves to be honored but the treasure that is contained within it. Any homage given to the vessel would be a distraction from the treasure.

### **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of

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<sup>19</sup> For further study we recommend *Christ's Object Lessons*, Chapter 2: “The Sower Went Forth to Sow.”

the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;  
<sup>28</sup> And the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,  
<sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in His presence.

## **2 Corinthians 4**

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Every person used by God as a vessel in which He places His treasure should give the honor to God, and not take it to themselves. But whoever honors the treasure aright will also appreciate the vessel which is used to communicate the treasure. This means that we will love those whom the Lord gives us to pass on the message. And for those who really appreciate the message this will be quite natural.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, serves as a fitting example of those who truly appreciate the treasure.

## **Luke 10**

<sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.

To "sit at the feet of Jesus" means to be still and to listen to Him. But it also means that we humble ourselves, give up our own ways, and accept His rebukes. It means to love Jesus.

The Galatians similarly expressed their appreciation for the treasure of divine revelation, as Paul writes:

## **Galatians 4**

<sup>14</sup> And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

It should be the endeavor of every believer to accept the message with the same zeal. That is Gospel Order.





## 7. The Battle in Heaven

### The Universal Validity of Gospel Order

**T**HE entire church of God, and in fact the entire universe, rests on this confession of faith:

#### **Matthew 16**

<sup>16</sup> You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

It is the foundation of all order in heaven and on earth. In other words, it is not only valid for the times of the New Testament, but has formed the foundation of the universe ever since there have been created beings, that is, ever since there has been a need of Gospel Order.

As shown in the third chapter of this series, Jesus was the Son of God before His incarnation, and He has continued to be so ever since.

#### **Hebrews 13**

<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Christ already held His position as the Son of God, and as the Primary Messenger for all creatures, before this earth was created. Therefore, it is evident that His position is not only of great import for humanity. The Word of God gives us the following information about Christ:

#### **John 1**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus is here represented as the only begotten<sup>20</sup> of the Father, which emphasizes His special position as the unique Son of God.

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<sup>20</sup> In the original Greek the word reads: *monogenes* which comes from *monos*: “only, alone” and *genos*: “posterity, kind”. This can be translated, the “only one born” or “the only of its kind”.

## **John 1**

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

## **John 3**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

<sup>18</sup> He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

## **1 John 4**

<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

The theologians who lived at the time of Christ definitely had some idea of this special position, for they considered Jesus' words as blasphemy when He applied them to Himself.

## **John 5**

<sup>18</sup> Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 207:**

The whole nation of the Jews called God their Father, therefore they would not have been so enraged if Christ had represented Himself as standing in the same relation to God. But they accused Him of blasphemy, showing that they understood Him as making this claim in the highest sense.

John gives us an important insight into the uniqueness of Jesus' Sonship by describing it as a distinct "glory." In fact, His uniqueness can be recognized by this glory.

## **John 1**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus Himself revealed that He had this glory even before this world was created.

### **John 17**

<sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

<sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also whom You gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which You have given me; for You loved me before the foundation of the world.

Since the glory of Jesus is a sign of His Sonship, we can also read this text in the following way:

“And now, O Father, declare me to be Your Son, just as I was your Son before the world was. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my Sonship which You have given me; for You loved me before the foundation of the world.”

There are also clear references to the Sonship of Christ in the Old Testament. For example:

### **Psalms 2**

<sup>7</sup> I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to me, You are my Son, today I have begotten You.

The question as to which event is referred to here is clearly answered in the New Testament, as follows. In one instance, Paul applies this text to the resurrection of Christ. He says,

### **Acts 13**

<sup>32</sup> And we declare to you glad tidings...

<sup>33</sup> God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: You are my Son, today I have begotten You.

In another application, this text refers to Jesus' baptism. Baptism is a symbolic act which points to the death and resurrection of Christ.

### **Luke 3** [New Jerusalem Bible]

<sup>22</sup> And the Holy Spirit descended on Him in a physical form, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my Son; today have I fathered You.

In his letter to the *Hebrews*, Paul quotes this text without referring to a particular event.

### **Hebrews 1**

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are my Son, today I have begotten You? And again: I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?

This verse is a further confirmation of the uniqueness of Christ as God's Son. The next reference shows the connection between Christ's Sonship and His mediatorial work as High Priest.

### **Hebrews 5**

<sup>5</sup> So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: You are my Son, today I have begotten You.

From these manifold applications of *Psalms* 2 we must conclude that there was not only one event when Jesus came from the Father as a Son, but several. This thought is confirmed by the following prophecy:

### **Micah 5**

<sup>2</sup> But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

The Jews knew that this referred to the Messiah, and they quoted it to Herod when he asked them where the Messiah would be born. *Matthew* 2:3-6, *John* 7:42. Christ was to be the Ruler over Israel, and the Jews knew this. *Luke* 23:2, 38.

“...whose goings forth<sup>21</sup> are from of old.”

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<sup>21</sup> Hebrew: *mowtsa'ah*: “going forth, descent, origin.”

In the original Hebrew version, the word translated “goings forth” can also be translated as “origins.” This is the rendering given in the *New International Version* and other Bible translations. “Origin” can have both an active and a passive meaning. In the active sense, Christ is the Origin. In the passive sense, He actually has an origin. Both meanings are confirmed in the New Testament.

In *John* 1, the word used to portray the same thought is “beginning.”<sup>22</sup>

### **John 1**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

In this text we see that Christ, who is the Word, is Himself a Source, because all things were made through Him. However, the passive meaning of this word—that Jesus came from a Source, namely His Father—is also confirmed in the New Testament. Jesus said of Himself,

### **John 16**

<sup>28</sup> I came forth from the Father and have come into the world.

As we read of goings forth, or beginnings, in *Micah* 5:2, we know that Christ did not go out from the Father only once, but several times. Jesus went out from the Father when He became a man and was conceived on this earth. He then went out from His Father again when He rose from the dead. But there were also times before His incarnation as a human that Christ went out from His Father, as it is written, “...from of old.”

There is another text from the Old Testament that throws

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<sup>22</sup> Greek: *ar-khay*: “commencement, beginning, origin.”

more light on these mysterious goings forth of the Messiah. Speaking of Christ, whom God has made to be wisdom<sup>23</sup> for us, we read,

**Proverbs 8<sup>24</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.

<sup>23</sup> I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.

<sup>24</sup> When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water.

<sup>25</sup> Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth;

<sup>26</sup> While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primeval dust of the world.

<sup>27</sup> When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep,

<sup>28</sup> When He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep,

<sup>29</sup> When He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth,

<sup>30</sup> Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.

This text makes it apparent that the times “of old” in which Christ went out from the Father were before the creation of this world. And therefore Christ can rightly be called the Son of God even before this world was made.

<sup>23</sup> I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.

Indeed, these goings forth lie so far back in time that it can be said “...from everlasting.” *Micah* 5:2. Concerning this text E. J. Waggoner wrote,

We know that Christ “proceeded forth and came from God”

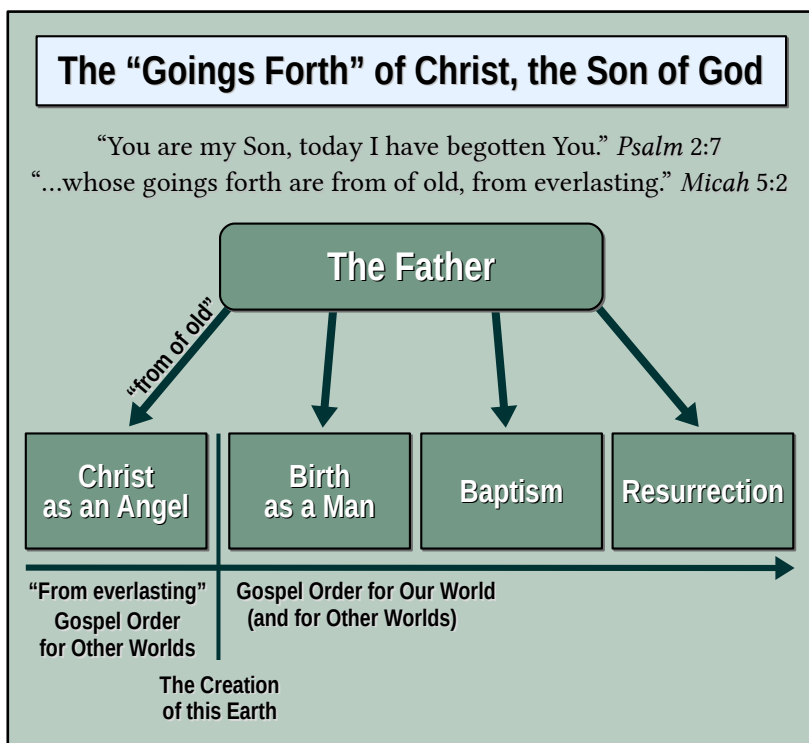
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<sup>23</sup> See *1 Corinthians* 1:30 - “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God...”

<sup>24</sup> The New Testament parallel text to this verse is *John* 1:1-3.

(*John* 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man.<sup>25</sup>

As the Bible itself plainly points out, God has no beginning. This means that Christ, as God, also had no beginning. But in His function as the Son of God, that is, when He came forth from the Father, He did have a beginning. However, His first coming forth lies so far back in eternity that, in order for us to grasp the thought, we can say Christ was the Son of God from eternity.



If Christ was the living Son of God before the creation of this world, even from eternity, then Gospel Order not only applies to this earth but must be a fundamental part of all the worlds that were created in this eternal past. Therefore Gospel

<sup>25</sup> E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, Chapter 2: "How Shall We Consider Christ?"

Order is a universal order. In the light of these facts the following statement can be understood much better.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 680:**

Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth.

## **The Battle Over Gospel Order**

Transgression of Gospel Order has a long tradition. It reaches back beyond the creation of our world. When the serpent deceived Eve into transgressing the explicit word of God, the one who used the serpent as a medium was already involved in open warfare against Gospel Order.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die.

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

The one who used the serpent as a medium was called Satan,<sup>26</sup> in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, or the devil<sup>27</sup> in the Greek of the New Testament. Apart from these, he has other names which aptly describe his character.

This connection between Satan and the serpent is made clear in the following text.

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

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<sup>26</sup> Hebrew *Satan*: "opponent, adversary, enemy".

<sup>27</sup> Greek *diabolos*: "false accuser, opponent, deceiver". Sometimes the Hebrew word *Satan* was used in the Greek.



This intimates that the serpent that deceived Eve was actually Satan, who had been previously cast down to this earth with his angels. But even before Satan's deception of our world, the battle over Gospel Order had already broken out in heaven, as it is written,

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>7</sup> And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

<sup>8</sup> But they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This text clearly refers to a war, but how do we know that this war in heaven concerned Gospel Order? The description of the battle gives us the first clue. It is a battle between "Michael" and "Satan." Michael, the leader of the angels, is also mentioned in the book of *Daniel*. He is there referred to as the great prince (*Daniel* 12:1; see also *Daniel* 10:13, 21), and in the New Testament as the archangel (*Jude* 9).

### **Daniel 12**

<sup>1</sup> At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.

<sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Jesus referred to this verse in His sermon in *Matthew* 24 about the latter days. Here He calls the time of trouble a great tribulation.

### **Matthew 24**

<sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not

been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

In verses 29-31 He describes the deliverance from this tribulation.

<sup>29</sup> Immediately after the tribulation of those days...

<sup>30</sup> The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven,...

<sup>31</sup> And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

In *Daniel*, it is the great prince Michael who saves the people, and in *Matthew*, He is called the Son of Man. Jesus used this appellation for Himself, and so revealed that the Son of Man—Christ—is the archangel Michael who “stands watch over the sons of your people.” The name itself points to such an interpretation, because Michael means “who is like God.”<sup>28</sup>

The above exposition verifies that the war in heaven, as related in *Revelation* 12, was a battle between Christ and Satan. But why should the battle be waged between these two? Why was it not between God the Father and Satan? The reference in this struggle to Christ as the archangel Michael is an important one, for it gives us an insight into the nature of the battle.

We learned in a previous chapter that “angel” means the same as “messenger,” and that the “archangel” is the “primary messenger.”<sup>29</sup> This means that the battle took place between Satan and the primary messenger. The other angels in heaven filled the role of secondary messengers. They received the message from the primary messenger and passed it on to others. In this war, there were messengers who passed on

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<sup>28</sup> An old rabbinical doctrine says, “Wherever Michael appears is the Shekinah glory.” Exodus rabba (Shemot rabba), Midrash about Exodus (Strack, Einl., 208), Page 2, commentary on *Exodus* 3:2; quoted in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, Page 81.

<sup>29</sup> See chapter 3, “The Meaning of Angel,” and “Christ the Primary Messenger.”

Michael's messages, and there were messengers who conveyed Satan's messages, as it is written,

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>7</sup> Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought.

So then, this battle must have been concerned with two different messages, and also with the question as to whose message was true. Both messages could not be true, because there was a battle between them. The fact that Satan and his angels were unable to gain the victory shows that their message was a lie. This is how his name of "Deceiver" (or Devil) came about.

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

The controversy over whose message is true, naturally involves the question of who the rightful primary messenger is. Or to ask it another way,

"Who passes on the messages of the Father?"

### **John 1**

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Christ—the only begotten, or unique, Son of the Father—is in the Father's bosom, therefore He is the only true Messenger who can proclaim the Father. Although nobody else could possibly fulfill this position, that is obviously just what Satan was fighting for.

## **How did this Battle Begin?**

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was

cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

On this earth we are fighting on the front line, as far as the battle of Gospel Order is concerned. This in itself is reason enough to ask what this battle is all about and where it began. We need to come to a better understanding of the nature and course of this struggle. In turn, this knowledge will give us a deeper insight into the history of this world—the history of the great controversy over Gospel Order.

Another reason why we need to understand the origin of this battle is because what began in the greater universe is being continually repeated on a smaller scale in our daily lives. An understanding of cause and effect will help us to make more intelligent decisions and to avoid mishap and separation from our heavenly Source and from one another.

Making the right decision is the first part of our duty; the other part is having the strength to carry it out. But everyone who is willing and sincere will receive the necessary strength from God to come into harmony with His order.

In our efforts to gain a better understanding of the battle in heaven, and its beginnings, the repetition of this struggle on earth offers valuable object lessons. A guiding principle in this matter is,

### **Ecclesiastes 1**

<sup>9</sup> That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

No two events are the same in every detail for they are historically unique, but the same principles can be seen at work in them, even though there may be some variation. No two people are the same, yet if they are inspired by the same spirit they will behave similarly.

In the same way, we know how a person will react in a given situation if we know what kind of a spirit he has. For example, believers who have become one in thought, feeling,

and action, will react the same way in certain situations. And those who have become united in their rejection of the truth will also react in a similar way.

What we are looking at here is the application of the laws of cause and effect. For the human mind, as well as for history, the principle is:

The same causes lead to the same effects.<sup>30</sup>

What relevance does this principle have to our theme about the battle over Gospel Order?

While the study of history helps us to gain a better understanding of the present and the future, conversely, a correct understanding of the present will help us to gain a better grasp of history.

All this serves as an object lesson so that we can comprehend prehistoric events—events that took place before the creation of this world. This is exactly the same principle that the Bible uses when it speaks of the battle in heaven. For example, it explains Lucifer's fall using the example of the king of Babylon.

#### **Isaiah 14**

<sup>3</sup> It shall come to pass...

<sup>4</sup> That you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say...

<sup>12</sup> How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!

<sup>13</sup> For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north;

<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

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<sup>30</sup> Compare with *The Great Controversy*, p. 378: "Wherever the cause exists, the same results will follow."

<sup>15</sup> Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

This prophecy obviously describes somebody other than the king of Babylon. First of all, a fall from heaven is described which, according to *Revelation* 12:9, applies to Satan. However, in this text Isaiah refers to Satan as Lucifer,<sup>31</sup> which literally means “the morning star”.<sup>32</sup> This comparison with the morning star refers to the planet Venus, the next brightest heavenly body after the sun and the moon. In fact, Venus is so bright that it can sometimes be seen during the day. On a cloudless night it shines so brightly that it can throw shadows.

The word of God compares the stars with the angels:

### **Revelation 1**

<sup>20</sup> The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

In *Revelation* 12, where the warfare in heaven and its conclusion is described, the angels are again described as stars.

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>4</sup> His [Satan’s] tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth...

<sup>9</sup> ...and his angels were cast out with him.

And so the picture from *Isaiah* 14 becomes clearer. The morning star thought of himself,

“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.”

That is, he wanted to be exalted above the other angels.

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<sup>31</sup> Hebrew *heylel*.

<sup>32</sup> *Isaiah* 14:12 [New International Version]: “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!”

What position does the morning star want to have? It is already brighter than all the other stars, and yet there is another Morning Star. That is Christ, as it is written,

### **Numbers 24**

<sup>17</sup> A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.

Speaking of Himself, Jesus says,

### **Revelation 22**

<sup>16</sup> I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.

And Peter also speaks of this Morning Star.

### **2 Peter 1**

<sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

As we have already seen, Christ is not only an angel, He is also God. And therefore He is unique.

### **Hebrews 1**

<sup>3</sup> Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

<sup>4</sup> Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are my Son, today I have begotten You? And again: I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?

<sup>6</sup> But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: Let all the angels of God worship Him.

<sup>7</sup> And of the angels He says: Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.

<sup>8</sup> But to the Son He says: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your Kingdom.

<sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than your companions.

Next to Christ, Lucifer was the brightest star. But he wanted to reign over all the stars, including Christ. In other words, he wanted to have Christ's position. And it is in this sense that the second part of his thoughts are to be understood: "I will be like the Most High" (*Isaiah* 14:14), namely the "Most High" Angel, the only begotten Son, the archangel Michael.

But Christ's position is unique:

### **John 1**

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

This means that every creature, including Lucifer, was dependent on what he heard from Christ for his knowledge of God. That is Gospel Order. By striving for this position, at first in thought and later in deed, Lucifer developed an increasing aversion for Gospel Order—the order that God Himself had ordained in heaven. His rebellion continued until it broke out into open warfare.

Another picture is given us of the start of this battle in heaven in the example of the king of Tyrus.

### **Ezekiel 28**

<sup>12</sup> Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God: You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

<sup>13</sup> You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.

<sup>14</sup> The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

<sup>15</sup> You were perfect in your ways from the day you were cre-



ated, till iniquity was found in you.

<sup>16</sup> By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.

<sup>17</sup> Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.

<sup>18</sup> You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you.

<sup>19</sup> All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever.

Although the history of an apostate king is described here, the comparison with Lucifer, the covering cherub, is obvious. Cherubim are angels, and they are mentioned in several places in the word of God. After the fall of Adam and Eve, cherubim guarded Paradise. They had a bright light at their side that shone in all directions, and which is described as a “sword.”

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>24</sup> ...and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

When cherubim are spoken of in the Bible, it is always in connection with this light, which is a sign of God's presence. For example, the glory of God was found between the two symbolic cherubim in the Most Holy of the sanctuary.

### **Exodus 25**

<sup>18</sup> And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.

<sup>19</sup> Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat.

<sup>20</sup> And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat.

<sup>21</sup> You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.

<sup>22</sup> And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

The prophet Ezekiel also saw the cherubim associated with God's presence.

### **Ezekiel 10**

<sup>1</sup> And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

So then, the cherubim are always mentioned in association with the throne of God, which is an indication of the high position they occupy. This is a further confirmation of the high position which Lucifer occupied in the divine order. However, he was only a creature, and therefore not qualified to fill the position of the Son of God.

After describing the original perfection of the cherub Lucifer in heaven, the report goes on to explain the beginnings of his apostasy.

### **Ezekiel 28**

<sup>16</sup> By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned...

<sup>17</sup> Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor...

<sup>18</sup> You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading.

Lucifer's trading was most certainly not in material goods,

but in spiritual values. As “light bearer” it was his task to pass on the light that he received from God through Christ. Obviously, at some point in time he lost sight of the fact that he was only a channel and not the originator of this wonderful light. As a light bearer he was God’s sanctuary, and by exalting his own wisdom he defiled this sanctuary.

In the tabernacle, the earthly sanctuary, God Himself kindled a fire that burned continually. No other fire was permitted to be placed on the altar of incense. The command was:

### **Exodus 30**

<sup>9</sup> You shall not offer strange incense on it.

By trying to put his own wisdom in the place of God’s wisdom, Lucifer brought “strange fire” into his sanctuary and so desecrated it. Lucifer wanted to receive the praise and honor for himself and considered the light he bore as his own property. He ceased to be a true channel, a true son. From this point on, everything that he said no longer came from God but from himself. He became a self-sent messenger.

## **Self-sent Messengers**

A messenger who possesses the character of a son does not claim the honor for himself, but gives it to the one from whom he has received the message. He faithfully passes on what he receives without adding anything or taking anything away. By contrast, a self-sent messenger seeks his own glory.

The difference between these two characters is especially apparent in the example of John the Baptist. John had only one goal—to point others to Jesus, the true Light of life. He saw himself as a mere channel through which the light flowed, and which led to the Light. He said,

### **John 3**

<sup>28</sup> You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent before Him.

<sup>29</sup> He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of

the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

<sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease.

In contrast to this, stands the character of the cherub described in *Ezekiel* 28.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 35:**

Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone.

It was Lucifer's desire for the position of primary messenger that brought about the great controversy over Gospel Order. It is extremely important to have this point clearly in our minds and so avoid confusion as the battle progresses and Lucifer's lies start to come in.

The other angels could not read Lucifer's thoughts, and he was unwilling to admit what the heart of the matter was, namely his desire for the highest position. Instead, he pointed out the defects of the other angels along with a recommendation as to how everything could be done better. He offered to work hard for the sake of the cause itself, while at the same time professing his humility.

A very good illustration of Lucifer's tactics is found in the example of Absalom, who wanted to become king of Israel.

### **2 Samuel 15**

<sup>1</sup> After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

<sup>2</sup> Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to

the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, What city are you from? And he would say, Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> Then Absalom would say to him, Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you.

<sup>4</sup> Moreover Absalom would say, Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.

<sup>5</sup> And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.

<sup>6</sup> In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

This story demonstrates the start of the great controversy very clearly. Of Absalom it could be said,

“For you have said in your heart: I will ascend to the judgment seat, I will exalt my throne above the children of Israel; I will also sit on the throne of Jerusalem; I will ascend above the heights of the people, I will be like the King.” (See *Isaiah* 14:13-14.)

But Absalom presented these aims in such a light as to make others think that he was concerned only about the cause of the deprived. Just as Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, so Lucifer stole the hearts of the angels and drew a third of the entire heavenly host to his side.

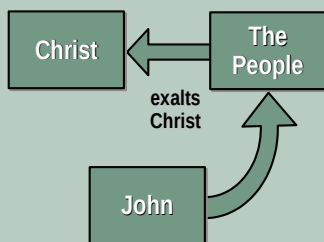
### **Revelation 12**

<sup>4</sup> His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

The followers of both Lucifer and Absalom were blinded to the fact that their messengers were self-sent. We need to beware of being similarly deceived or of even deceiving ourselves and others by aspiring to a position that the Lord has not deemed fit to give us.

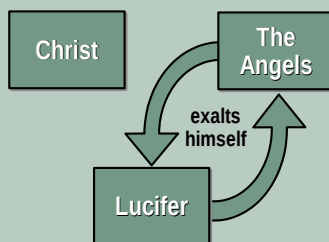
## The Difference Between God's Messenger and a Self-sent Messenger

### The Attitude of John the Baptist



"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled." *John 3:29*

### The Attitude of Lucifer



"Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35

## The Weapons of Warfare

In order to understand the war that arose in heaven over Gospel Order, it is also necessary to consider the weapons and tactics of the parties involved. Whenever a war, such as that described in *Revelation 12*, is mentioned, most people think of physical strife with physical weapons. And this is precisely the view presented by many artists in their works.

Doré, a well-known illustrator of Bible themes, clearly gives such a representation to this particular battle. But there are other pictures that are even more graphic in this respect. Such pictures show that the text from *Revelation 12* is not rightly understood. God's ways are not the same as the ways of sinful humanity. Therefore, the nature of His war is completely different from ours.



Engraving: "Paradise Lost" by Gustave Doré, 1866 ([wikimedia](#))  
This illustration falsely represents the war in heaven as carnal in nature.

Speaking of Himself, He says,

**Isaiah 55**

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

In His words to Pilate, Jesus was even more specific.

### **John 18**

<sup>36</sup> My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here.

Through these words Christ unequivocally declared that He does not gain the victory over Satan and his angels by physical force. If He, as the archangel Michael, had wanted to use force, then there would never have been a war at all, for as Creator He could have destroyed Satan as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth.



Fresco: "War in Heaven" by Paul Troger, 1739 ([wikimedia](#))  
Another piece of artwork that misrepresents the warfare in heaven.

One reason that Christ does not fight this kind of warfare is because it never leads to a permanent victory. The history of this earth, with its innumerable wars and acts of retaliation, is proof enough of this fact.

But what alternatives are there for overcoming evil? It is repeatedly claimed that there is no other way, and that is why



force has to be applied as the last resort. However, there is in fact a successful alternative, although it is not popular and, generally speaking, is not taken seriously. This alternative is the word of God. This word, in its truest application, is not merely a written or spoken word, but a living word. This word is a mightier weapon than the sword, with which it is often compared.

#### **Hebrews 4**

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

#### **Ephesians 6**

<sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

### **Christ's Weapons**

This concept of the word is also used in the description of Christ in *Revelation*:

#### **Revelation 1**

<sup>16</sup> ...out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

In another place, this word is mentioned as the weapon that Christ uses in the great controversy.

#### **Revelation 19**

<sup>11</sup> Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

<sup>12</sup> His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

<sup>13</sup> He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

<sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

<sup>16</sup> And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Christ gains the victory by the sword that goes out of His mouth. At the same time, we are informed that He makes war in righteousness. The very essence of the word of God is righteousness. Therefore, the word of God can also be described as “righteousness.”

It is true that physical force is often seen as an agency of righteousness, but this is not the case here. Righteousness is not the end that sanctifies the means, but the means that leads to victory. And righteousness includes truth.

#### **Psalm 89**

<sup>14</sup> Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.

#### **Psalm 119**

<sup>142</sup> Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.

#### **Daniel 4**

<sup>37</sup> Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice.

#### **John 14**

<sup>6</sup> I am the way, the truth, and the life.

When Jesus explained to Pilate that physical force does not play a part in His kingdom, He presented the alternative in clear terms:

#### **John 18**

<sup>37</sup> For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

Righteousness also includes love. Without love, righteousness would be an empty shell, a facade without an interior. Love makes righteousness a sharp, living weapon.

### 1 John 4

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

<sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

### 1 John 4

<sup>16</sup> God is love.



### The Desire of Ages, p. 759:

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not

do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

## Satan's Weapons

What weapons did Lucifer use in the war that began in heaven?

In contrast with Michael, he did not use righteousness, truth, goodness, mercy, and love. When speaking to the Pharisees on one occasion, Jesus revealed the weapons of His enemy.

### John 8

<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Satan's weapons are most visible in his children. By observing the lives of the children of this world, we can see that Satan and his angels are murderers and liars. When we think of the power that Satan and his angels have over humanity, then it is surprising that murders and fraud are not more frequent. Satan is even referred to as the "ruler of this world" (see *John* 12:31; *John* 14:30; *John* 16:11) because of the power he exercises.

However, as long as God and His servants are not completely rejected, the good angels are able to protect humanity. In order to prevent a total rejection, the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the world to distinguish between Satan's ways of working and God's ways.

### John 16

<sup>8</sup> And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin,

and of righteousness, and of judgment.

<sup>11</sup> ...because the ruler of this world is judged.

And yet many people refuse this knowledge and place themselves at the disposal of the presumed ruler of this world. This does not necessarily lead to their immediate death, because it is to the advantage of Satan and his angels to use them for a time in order, as they hope, to establish their kingdom more securely.

The behavior of Satan's children on this earth reveals very clearly that he will go to any lengths in his attempt to reach his goal of occupying the position of the Son of God. However, not every means is necessarily expedient for his cause. Although Satan is pushed forwards by his ambition of usurping the place of Christ, he is guided in this desire by satanic guile.

In heaven, neither Lucifer nor any of his angels would have been successful in attempting to kill even one of Michael's angels, let alone Michael Himself. Therefore, physical weapons would have been of no use to him. And so there only remained the verbal weapon of lies. Once again, his spiritual children on this earth reveal how skillfully he uses this weapon.

### **Psalm 62**

<sup>4</sup> They only consult to cast him down from his high position; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.

Lying means to feign the truth. In doing so, it is not necessary to present the opposite of the truth. There are other ways of leading people down the wrong track. The most successful counterfeits are those which most closely resemble the truth. Half-truths are often much more effective than bare-faced lies. Not only that, if a person is accused of deception they can always claim that they spoke the truth, and that the recipient of the information is responsible for the error.

For example, a mother may ask her daughter:

“Have you done the dishes?”

The girl has in fact washed two plates, but left the rest unwashed. If she considers that she has done her part she might answer,

“Yes I have washed up.”

The daughter knows exactly what is meant by the question. She knows that the question is intended to find out if all the washing up has been done. But she deliberately twists the question of the mother, and then answers accordingly. When it is finally discovered that the washing up has barely been touched, she justifies herself by implying that her mother is responsible for her misunderstanding because of her imprecise question. Basically, what she says to the mother is,

“You are responsible for this misunderstanding yourself. If you had asked the question more accurately you would have understood my answer perfectly.”

Let us not be mistaken in this matter—in the light of God’s law such tactics are lies, and that is how God sees them!

It is even possible to lie without the use of words, by acting differently from how we really think. If our purpose is to deceive the other person, then God looks upon it as a lie. But how often such liars justify themselves by claiming that they have not said anything wrong!

Another, very deceptive kind of lying is insinuation. While avoiding making a clear statement, a person may insinuate that something is factual, so that the listener fills in the missing pieces and passes on the message accordingly. The liar appears as though he was completely innocent because the passed-on message was not in fact what he said. The bearer of the message appears to be fully responsible for the error, as if he or she were the originator of the information. The real liar

then repeats the erroneous message, as if it came from someone else, thereby gaining support for his cause.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 38:**

Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him [Lucifer] by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that his agency was not discerned. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not fully in harmony with the government of God.

While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government. Thus while working to excite opposition to the law of God and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven. While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.

Other forms of lying are flattery and exaggeration, as are commonly seen in advertising. For example, the first thing that is written in the description of a newly bought product may be:

“Congratulations on your good taste! You have made a good choice.”

Where is the lie in this? Many manufacturers are not concerned about the customer making the best choice, but only that their own product is bought. Perhaps the customer is not very intelligent, or does not have good taste at all. But still the manufacturer tries to delude him into thinking that merely by the purchase of this product he has made an excellent choice. By using flattery, liars try to bind other people to themselves

and to their businesses.

People also use exaggeration to make their stories sound more newsworthy and to attract more attention, approval and admiration from others. But exaggeration, although often seemingly harmless, is another species of lying.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 41-42:**

...Lucifer had concluded that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also all the worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great. By disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood, he had gained an advantage. All his acts were so clothed with mystery that it was difficult to disclose to the angels the true nature of his work. Until fully developed, it could not be made to appear the evil thing it was; his disaffection would not be seen to be rebellion. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading.

Lucifer had at first so conducted his temptations that he himself stood uncommitted. The angels whom he could not bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings. The very work which he himself was doing, he charged upon the loyal angels. It was his policy to perplex with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah. And his high position, so closely connected with the divine government, gave greater force to his representations.

God could employ only such means as were consistent with truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit.

One sign of lying is a lack of openness. A lie is always designed to hide something. That is why the Bible also refers to it as “the mystery of lawlessness” (or “mystery of iniquity,” KJV):



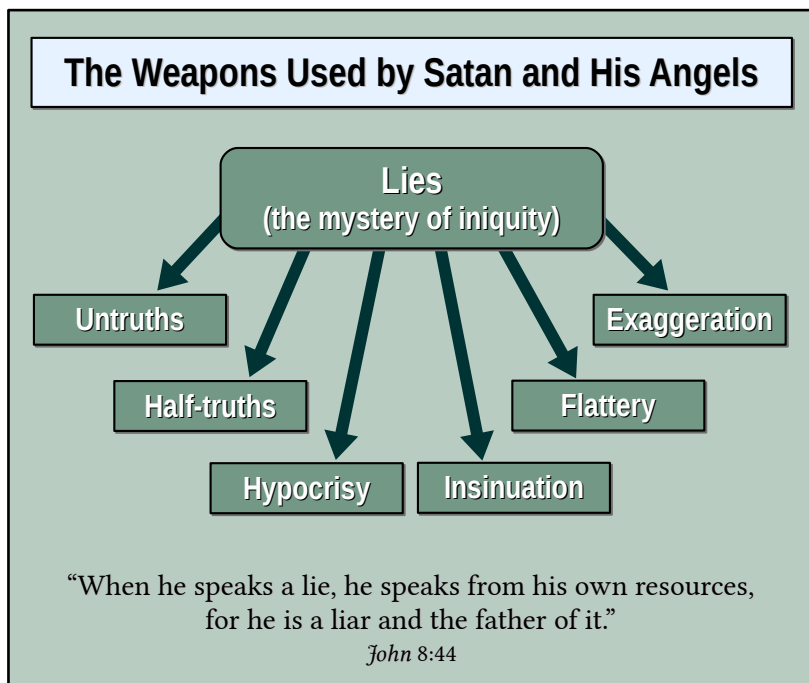
## 2 Thessalonians 2

<sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...

<sup>9</sup> The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

<sup>10</sup> And with all unrighteous deception...

<sup>11</sup> ...that they should believe the lie.



## Satan is Cast Out

In the battle in heaven it was not a question of who was physically the strongest, but of what was the right way. What was the true order? The controversial question was,

“Is Gospel Order the correct order or not?”

Throughout the entire conflict God did not change His order in the least in order to counter Satan’s rebellion. In fact, God’s principles of Gospel Order, which have always been valid, were only confirmed by this war.

Christ compares this divine order to a door, and in doing so He describes the circumstances under which Satan was cast out.

### **John 10**

<sup>1</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

<sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

<sup>3</sup> To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

<sup>4</sup> And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

<sup>5</sup> Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

In this parable the sheep are representative of those created beings who feel their need of coming to God. In other words, not only humans but also created beings, such as the angels in the unfallen worlds, are referred to here. Jesus is the door for the sheep.

<sup>7</sup> Then Jesus said to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

This means that we can come to God only through Christ.

### **John 14**

<sup>6</sup> No one comes to the Father except through me.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 331:**

Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ.

That is the order of heaven—Gospel Order. Jesus then goes on to speak of the thief who will not enter through the door. Obviously, this is referring to somebody who does not want Gospel Order. Such a person ignores the door. And this is exactly what Satan's attitude in heaven was.

Jesus says that whoever disregards Gospel Order is a thief who comes to steal and murder the sheep. It is easy to under-

stand this statement when we consider how Satan wanted to achieve his goal of self-exaltation. He tried to steal the hearts of the angels, and he was successful in the case of one third of them. Naturally, a thief tries to creep in without being noticed. In the same way, Satan works in the background through the agency of deception.

Jesus' statement about the relationship between the sheep and the thief is very interesting. The sheep do not follow the thief as they do their shepherd. He is a stranger to them, and they are actually afraid of him and therefore run away from him. This explains the relationship of the angels and other created beings towards Satan, and in fact towards every transgressor of Gospel Order.

This relationship of fear between the thief and the sheep not only applies to the sheep that he can steal, but also to those that he cannot steal. Satan's kingdom is built on fear. Here the will of the strongest rules, and obedience is rendered only out of fear.

But let us consider the sheep that the thief cannot steal—the loyal angels. They were in a relationship with Satan that could be described as increasing alienation. They “ran away” from him. In other words, they no longer sought his fellowship and they closed their hearts to him. It is in this sense that Lucifer was cast out of heaven. Since he was not willing to enter in by the door, he found no entrance at all, for no other door was opened. The doors of heaven remained closed to him.

However, this condition of alienation between the loyal angels and Satan did not suddenly appear. It was only little by little that Lucifer revealed himself as Satan, the thief.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 42:**

Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper and his real object must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works.

The discord which his own course had caused in heaven, Satan charged upon the government of God. All evil he declared to be the result of the divine administration. He claimed that it was his own object to improve upon the statutes of Jehovah.

Therefore God permitted him to demonstrate the nature of his claims, to show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. His own work must condemn him. Satan had claimed from the first that he was not in rebellion. The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked.

Satan did not leave heaven voluntarily. But the warfare finally grew to such proportions that separation was inevitable.

**The Great Controversy, p. 499:**

To the very close of the controversy in heaven the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator's law. He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence.

With one accord, Satan and his host threw the blame of their rebellion wholly upon Christ, declaring that if they had not been reprov'd, they would never have rebelled. Thus stubborn and defiant in their disloyalty, seeking vainly to overthrow the government of God, yet blasphemously claiming to be themselves the innocent victims of oppressive power, the arch-rebel and all his sympathizers were at last banished from heaven.

We can only guess at the amount of suffering that this rebellion caused in heaven. But we can see some of the suffering that has arisen from transgression of Gospel Order on this earth. Such suffering can be dealt with only by putting away

the causes for it. In other words, Satan's deceptions must be unmasked. It must be demonstrated that the one who does not come in through the door is a thief, a liar, and a murderer.

As the sheep of God, we must come to the point where the thief is absolutely foreign to us and therefore we run away from him. At the same time we need to recognize the love of God as it is revealed in His law of Gospel Order. In this way Gospel Order will become an order that we will love to follow. It must be completely restored in our lives, in the church, and in the world before an end can be made of all suffering.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 21-22:**

In heaven itself this law was broken. Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men. He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. Because God is a God of justice and terrible majesty, Satan caused them to look upon Him as severe and unforgiving. Thus he drew men to join him in rebellion against God, and the night of woe settled down upon the world.

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." *Malachi 4:2.*

## The Origin of the Great Controversy over Gospel Order

Lucifer's Goal

To be First in Heaven  
(he was a thief)

The Method

Lies

The Result

Rebellion

Rebellion against  
Gospel Order is a result,  
the cause of which is  
the desire to be first.

It is sometimes difficult  
to see this because of  
Satan's deceptions.

Suffering

Death

The war in heaven was only the first chapter in the great battle that has continued up to the present time on this earth. Gospel Order was the bone of contention back then, and it is still the subject of the controversy today.

But in heaven Gospel Order was maintained and remained an eternal ordinance, whereas Satan's efforts to introduce a different order failed. This result in heaven is a promise that there will be a final victory over Satan on this earth as well, and that Gospel Order will become established once more.

## 8. Satan and His Angels are Cast to the Earth

### Revelation 12

<sup>9</sup> So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

**T**HIS Bible text deals with two phases of the battle between God and Satan. The first phase was when Satan was cast out of heaven, and the second was when he was cast to the earth. What does “cast” mean in this context, and why was he cast to this earth? We want to answer these two questions.

As we have already seen, the great controversy is all about Gospel Order. When Lucifer transgressed this order he separated himself from God. He did everything in his power to lead the other angels to transgress in the same way, but he was successful with only a third of the host. These fallen angels are now united in their efforts to draw humanity into their rebellion against Gospel Order. And so Lucifer, who is now called Satan, is continuing the battle on earth that he began in heaven.

Many people imagine that the war in heaven was won by the physical power of the stronger side. But if it was simply a question of physical prowess, then Satan would have long since ceased to exist. He could have been destroyed as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 759). But God does not fight physical battles. He does not gain the victory by His physical superiority, but with truth and love.

Just as some people have a wrong concept of how Satan was cast out of heaven, so they have a wrong concept of how he was cast to the earth. But what really took place? And why was the devil cast to this earth? Were there no other planets that would have served as a residence, or even as a prison, for

Satan? God is even accused, among other allegations, of creating the earth as a theater for His battle with Satan. But all this supposition is seen as vacuous when we look at the infinite sacrifice that God made for us.

## **How was Satan Cast to the Earth?**

The word of God simply says,

### **Revelation 12**

<sup>9</sup> ...he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

What does this statement mean? The words “cast out” indicate that there is someone who is actively involved in this. The usual conclusion is that the almighty God threw Satan and his angels to this earth by the use of physical force. How could it be otherwise? Who else could do this other than God, the absolute Ruler? Was it not His will that Satan should come to this earth?

Satan would certainly not have been able to withstand the overpowering will of God, so he had to come to this earth, whether he wanted to or not. But this view reveals that the question is seen as being one of physical strength.

There is, however, a different way of viewing this, which requires us to dig deeper into the word of God. When we get to know the Holy Scriptures better, then we see that much of what God simply permitted is actually described as if He was actively involved. The reason for this is that God not only takes the responsibility for the things that He does Himself, but also for what he permits to happen. The following example is an illustration of this principle.

In the Old Testament we read about the patriarch Job, who became involved in a battle between God and Satan. God valued Job because he was faithful in all things, and therefore gave an effective demonstration of Gospel Order. After Satan accused Job of being faithful only for selfish reasons, God per-



mitted the enemy to attack him with disaster and sickness. In God's first instruction to Satan, He said,

### **Job 1**

<sup>12</sup> Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.

Then Satan robbed the patriarch of his children and all his possessions. When Job still remained faithful the enemy was even bolder.

### **Job 2**

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.

<sup>7</sup> So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Although the Lord had permitted Satan to attack Job, He took the responsibility for Job's ruin Himself, as we read,

<sup>3</sup> Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him without cause.

God could have stopped Satan, and then nothing would have happened to Job. But both He and Job were intent on finishing the great controversy, and so He entered into battle with Satan in order that the contrast between His and Satan's character would become manifest.

God trusted Job. He knew that His servant would remain faithful, even in the face of death, and even if he did not understand the great trial he would pass through. God permitted the suffering, and He also bore the pain of it Himself.<sup>33</sup>

Now we want to apply this principle to the situation when

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<sup>33</sup> Another example is the choice of the first king in Israel. See *1 Samuel* 8, *Hosea* 13:11.

Satan was cast to this earth. God took the responsibility for what He permitted to happen, so how did Satan come to this earth?

We first read of the existence of evil in connection with this world in *Genesis* chapters two and three.

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil bears a name that does not really belong to God's creation. God did not create evil. In chapter three we read that Satan, the serpent,<sup>34</sup> was closely connected with this tree. God had said:

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die,

But the serpent misled Eve with the words,

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>4</sup> You will not surely die.

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

This conversation took place at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for we read,

<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.

This means that Satan was on this earth right from its beginning, in paradise. However, his field of action was limited to one place. It was only here that he was permitted to use his weapons, and it was only here that Adam and Eve were not to

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<sup>34</sup> See *Revelation* 12:9 and Chapter 7, "[The Battle Over Gospel Order](#)."

go—to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Obviously, humanity did not need this kind of knowledge. If a person has nothing to do with evil, then they do not need to know it—it is enough for them to know the good. To have a knowledge of good and evil means to have had an experience with evil—an experience which God would rather have spared His creation.

God could have placed an impassable wall around the tree, or his angels could have made this area out-of-bounds. But the only barrier to the tree was God's spoken word. This word was to be enough in itself to protect the first human beings from the place where Satan could deceive them and gain power over them. It was this word, spoken through God's angelic messengers, that humanity had to learn to trust.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**

The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers.

This word of God was not limited to a simple prohibition. Adam and Eve were also given assistance to help them keep the law. The angels related the history of Lucifer's fall and also warned them not to separate from one another.<sup>35</sup>

If our first parents had heeded these words the door would have remained forever closed to Satan. He would never have gained an entrance to this earth, and it would never have been written that:

**Revelation 12**

<sup>9</sup> ...he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

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<sup>35</sup> See *The Story of Redemption*, p. 29-31, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53.

But unfortunately, Adam (through Eve) opened the door to Satan, which is why it is written,

### **Romans 5**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

These texts clearly show that Satan did not come to this earth through an arbitrary decision of God, but through man opening the door to him—against the express will of the Creator.

And so we see that it was not God and His angels who actively cast Satan to the earth. Satan wanted to come to this earth, and that is why he deceived Adam and Eve. God simply permitted it, and it is only in this sense that He cast Satan and his angels to the earth.

## **A Scriptural Parallel**

There is an interesting parallel to this event in the New Testament. In fact, the great controversy is repeated in many incidents on this earth. Both God's and Satan's methods were demonstrated when Jesus delivered the two maniacs from Gergesa. These two men were cleansed of the demons—Satan and his angels—just as heaven was originally cleansed.

Matthew, who was an eye-witness of the event, gives his report of it in the following words:

### **Matthew 8**

<sup>28</sup> When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.

<sup>29</sup> And suddenly they cried out, saying, What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?

Although Jesus had not yet done anything to them, they

were obviously tortured by His presence. Indeed, sin cannot bear the presence of holiness. Every sinner feels condemned or tormented by the presence of a righteous person. Just as Satan left his place in the immediate presence of God because he could no longer bear it, so the evil spirits also wanted to flee from the Saviour. But where should they go?

### **Matthew 8**

<sup>30</sup> Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding.

<sup>31</sup> So the demons begged Him, saying, If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.

So then, it was clearly the wish of the demons to enter into the swine, and Jesus permitted them to do so.

<sup>32</sup> And He said to them, Go. So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

This incident is very revealing because it clearly shows Satan's, and his angels', purpose. Their interest is centered on ruining and destroying all of God's creation. When the evil spirits entered the swine it was not their purpose to give a demonstration of their aims, but to cast a bad light on Jesus' work. He would then be made responsible for the destruction of the swine because He forced the evil spirits to enter them!

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 340:**

In causing the destruction of the swine, it was Satan's purpose to turn the people away from the Saviour, and prevent the preaching of the gospel in that region.

It seemed as if their plan was successful because the people of that region were afraid of Christ and asked Him to leave.

### **Matthew 8**

<sup>34</sup> And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.

Today, in much the same way, Satan tries to divert attention away from himself and point to God as being responsible for suffering and death. He is the originator of misery. He destroyed the swine. But he wanted the people to reject the Saviour as the One who had “sent” the bad spirits into the swine. Likewise, he wants the people of today to reject the Saviour because He “cast” Satan onto this earth.

Satan and his angels obviously obtained this goal with the Gergesenes in the very moment that the Saviour allowed them to enter the pigs. But in reality, God was pursuing a much higher goal. Satan cannot trick God, for God’s ways are profound, and they lead with unswerving certainty to the final victory of goodness, beneficence, righteousness, love, and life.

Jesus knew very well that the evil spirits would kill the swine. And yet He permitted it, for He also knew that by this means the owners of the pigs would be given an opportunity to part from their sinful and unhealthful practice of dealing with swine.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 338:**

It was in mercy to the owners of the swine that this loss had been permitted to come upon them. They were absorbed in earthly things, and cared not for the great interests of spiritual life. Jesus desired to break the spell of selfish indifference, that they might accept His grace. But regret and indignation for their temporal loss blinded their eyes to the Saviour’s mercy.

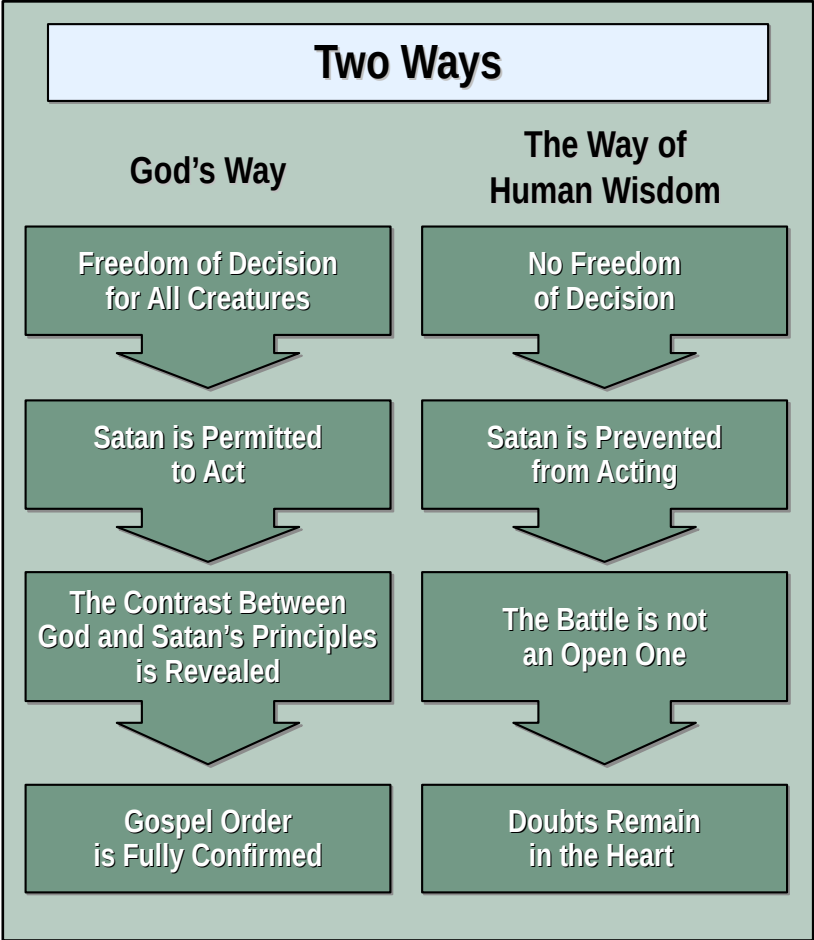
But the Lord wanted to bless others as well as the owners of the swine. Through this event He also wanted to direct the general attention of the people to the ministry of the gospel.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 340:**

But this very occurrence roused the whole country as nothing else could have done, and directed attention to Christ. Though the Saviour Himself departed, the men whom He had healed remained as witnesses to His power.

Those who had been mediums of the prince of darkness became channels of light, messengers of the Son of God. Men marveled as they listened to the wondrous news. A door was opened to the gospel throughout that region.

When Jesus returned to Decapolis, the people flocked about Him, and for three days, not merely the inhabitants of one town, but thousands from all the surrounding region, heard the message of salvation. Even the power of demons is under the control of our Saviour, and the working of evil is overruled for good.



Even though the Gergesenes initially rejected Christ, one

important fact remained: Satan was revealed as he really is—the destroyer! He was no longer able to mask his purposes, and every thoughtful person would have seen this. Not only that, the power of the Saviour had also been revealed.<sup>36</sup>

It was for the same reason that God allowed Satan to come and unfold his character here on earth. It was necessary for Satan's work to be revealed, even though we often find it difficult to accept this fact. We would prefer to make a quick end of evil. But God knows that sin can never be fully eliminated in this way.

So then, we can conclude that Satan himself wanted to come to this earth; that humanity gave him an entrance; and that God permitted him to do so because human beings actually opened the door for him.

God had given humanity the right, and the duty, of making free moral decision. They were to make a free choice in regard to the great controversy concerning Gospel Order. That was, and still is, our responsibility in this battle today.

## Why the Earth?

There were, and still are, other inhabited planets apart from ours (see *Early Writings*, p. 39). In the book of *Hebrews* we read of other worlds that were made. *Hebrews* 1:2; 11:3. Why did God have to cast Satan to this earth? Are we the garbage bin of the universe, where everything that is bad ends up? Our earth is certainly not a rubbish heap in God's eyes, for it is here that God sent His most precious and best.

### John 3

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

With the gift of His Son, God has committed Himself to cleanse the earth from everything that is unclean.

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<sup>36</sup> See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 341.



## **Revelation 21**

<sup>1</sup> Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

<sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

<sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful.

The blood of Christ is the guarantee that the earth will be renewed as a paradise.

## **Romans 8**

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Our heavenly Father, who loves us so much that He paid the highest price for our salvation, could never use this earth as a dumping ground. It was not God who wanted Satan to come to this earth, but Satan himself:

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 69:**

When Satan was thrust out of heaven, he determined to make the earth his kingdom.

The only questions are,

“Why did Satan want to come to this earth?”

“Why was our planet of such great interest to him?”

“Why did he see it as being a strategically advantageous place in his fight against Gospel Order?”

In order to answer these questions we need to understand God’s purpose in creating this world, and especially in creating human beings. In this connection, we read in the report of creation that:

## **Genesis 1**

<sup>26</sup> God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness...

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him.

## **In the Image of God**

So the purpose behind the creation of human beings was to provide an image of God. The important part of this picture, however, was not the outward form, as many people think, but the deeper spiritual level. There are many ways in which we can reveal an image of God. One way is, for example, through our character. Jesus spoke of this when He said:

### **Matthew 5**

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

Or in other words, that you may be an image of God. Referring to this image He further instructs us,

<sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Another aspect of our creation in the image of God is that we are the only creatures with the power of decision. In contrast with all the other creatures on this earth, it was only human beings who had the possibility of choosing to be obedient or disobedient at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. For this purpose Adam and Eve were given understanding and will-power, which they were free to exercise. It is this freedom of choice between obedience and disobedience, between right and wrong, which makes us morally free beings, just as God is.

Yet another part of our image of God is described here:

## **Genesis 1**

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

Just as God rules over the universe and all His creatures, so human beings were to rule over the earth. This refers not only to the way in which God rules, but also to the task itself. Then we read,

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

This raises an important question:

“Why did God create Eve as well as Adam?”

“And in what way is the creation of man and woman an image of God?”

What makes these questions even more important is the fact that the relationship of man and wife was obviously an order that was not previously known to the heavenly hosts. For example, speaking of the saved from this earth, Jesus said,

## **Matthew 22**

<sup>30</sup> For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.

Angels, therefore, do not marry. Consequently, they are neither men nor women, because the creation of human beings as men and women had the implementation of the marriage relationship as its goal, as we read,

## **Genesis 2**

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

The creation of man and woman was therefore a unique image of the Creator, and that is what makes this earth something very special.

**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1081:**

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made “in the image of God,” and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth.

What was “new” and “distinct” in the creation of this world? In what way was it different from all the previous creations? Usually, God creates things as described here:

**Hebrews 11**

<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

In other words, God makes something out of nothing. This is the kind of creation described in *Genesis*. But then a new element is brought in, as the following words show,

**Genesis 1**

<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.

Children are the fruit of this connection between man and woman. So, obviously, the birth of children would not be possible without men and women. But the way in which God populated the earth is different from all the other worlds, and therefore new and distinct. He did not create millions of people by forming them from the dust of the earth and then breathing His breath into them. Only Adam was created in this way. The first woman was then taken out of man, as it is written,

**Genesis 2**

<sup>7</sup> And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

<sup>22</sup> Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

Every other person was contained within our first parents, and was given life through the process of conception and birth. It is the ability to reproduce that makes humanity, man and woman, a new and distinct order. And it is this that represents, in a special sense, the image of God.

Before the creation of this world there was only one Being that was born, and that was the Son of God.

### **John 3**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And it was through the Son of God that the universe was populated with all the other creatures.

### **Colossians 1**

<sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

The image of God, therefore, is given in two things:

1. Man was originally alone (just as Christ was), and that through him the whole earth was filled with people.
2. Through man the process of birth (and Christ was also born as a Son) is explained.

## **The Earth: A Lesson Book**

At this point the question arises as to why the creation of humanity in the image of God was so important. There had been a rebellion in heaven over the position of Christ, and therefore over the order of God's kingdom. In order to answer the questions that this dispute generated, God created this earth and made humanity the "ruler" of it, as well as the "orig-

inator” of all subsequent human life.

This illustration was actually God’s answer to Satan’s rebellion against Gospel Order, because ever since Lucifer had questioned this order, the entire universe was occupied with this theme.

One third of the angels decided to take their place on Lucifer’s side. And this fact alone reveals to us the extent of the controversy. Just as Gospel Order was the central theme in heaven, so it became the major theme on this earth as well.

Lucifer did all he could to obtain the position of the Son of God, and to establish a different order.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:**

To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ’s, was first among the hosts of God.

Lucifer wanted to be the “ruler” and “originator” of all creation; He wanted life and truth to flow through him to every creature. Therefore he fought against Christ.

For His part, God did everything He could to confirm Gospel Order, for it is only this order that can form the foundation of His kingdom. God Himself had established this order, and He had provided it as the only way of life. Any other way would inevitably lead to death.

God’s way is not just a good way among many other ways that all lead to the same goal. Nor is it the best way. It is the *only way* to life.

**Acts 4**

<sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

**Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 106:**

God's way is always the right and the prudent way.

**The Bible Echo, February 1, 1897:**

It makes every difference with the future, eternal well-being of men whether they follow God's way or their own way.... Are there many paths to heaven? If so, man may take any path that suits his fancy. But there is only one true way.

God loves all His creatures, and that is why He is interested in preserving their lives and their happiness. It was for our sakes that He insisted on retaining Gospel Order as the only order. It was because this order was brought into question by Lucifer's rebellion that God had to defend it. In creating this earth He chose the best way possible to confirm Gospel Order.

In this connection, it is easy to understand that the inhabitants of other worlds also have an interest in the creation of this world. God referred to this interest when he asked Job,

**Job 38**

<sup>4</sup> Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?...

<sup>5</sup> Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

<sup>6</sup> To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone,

<sup>7</sup> When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

The singing and shouting for joy is another expression for,

**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1081:**

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man.

From its very inception, this world was at the heart of the controversy over Gospel Order. This is further evidenced by the fact that its creation was announced at the counsel in heaven, which God had called in order to give an explanation

of Gospel Order.<sup>37</sup> If our first parents had passed the test, this earth would have become a powerful illustration of Gospel Order, and Satan's rebellion would have lost its power.

It was for this reason that the devil had a special interest in making this earth his kingdom. He bent all his powers to the work of destroying the image of God, that is, the image of God's Gospel Order. The goal of establishing his kingdom on this earth was so important to Satan that he executed the attack on our first parents himself.

### **The Story of Redemption, p. 28:**

Satan held a consultation with his evil angels....He told them that he would not entrust any one of them to accomplish this work, for he thought that he alone had wisdom sufficient to carry forward so important an enterprise. He wished them to consider the matter while he should leave them and seek retirement, to mature his plans. He sought to impress upon them that this was their last and only hope. If they failed here, all prospect of regaining and controlling heaven, or any part of God's creation, was hopeless.

## **Christ and Gospel Order**

As has already been seen, the statement that human beings were created in the image of God, relates particularly to the fact that we are to be an image of God's Son. This makes the connection with Gospel Order much clearer.

Christ is the only begotten Son of God. As such, He is the only One through whom God created the worlds; the only One through whom He speaks to His creatures; the only One through whom all life flows from God to His creatures. Whoever rejects Christ rejects the Father, and whoever rejects the message that Christ brings cannot receive the gospel, because God has no other channel to reach us. That was the original order in heaven, and the life of the universe was dependent on

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<sup>37</sup> See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36 and *The Story of Redemption*, p. 19. The Father and the Son created the earth immediately after Satan had left heaven.



this principle.

### **Colossians 1**

<sup>16</sup> For by Him [Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

These words describe Gospel Order, the way in which everything from God comes through Christ to His creatures. To be created in the image of this only begotten Son means to be an illustration of Gospel Order.

On this earth, everything that came from Christ was to pass through Adam to his children. Every human being was to come from Adam, and he was to rule over the entire earth through his descendants.

### **Genesis 1**

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

As with every other intelligent person in the universe, Adam and Eve had to choose for or against Gospel Order. When they chose against it, and concurred with Satan's rebellion, Satan claimed this earth as his kingdom. He claimed the right to occupy the position that God had originally planned for Adam.

Satan also used humanity's ability to reproduce for his own purposes, and transferred his rebellion against Gospel Order from the parents to the children. His success in this strategy can be seen, for example, in the basic fear of Gospel Order that people exhibit, not to mention the contempt and hate that it engenders.

But the battle is not yet over. The history of this earth is not

just an account of Satan and his followers' war against Gospel Order; it is also a story of how Gospel Order functions successfully, even in a sinful world.

## **The Great Controversy over Gospel Order**

Gospel Order was the central theme of interest  
for the heavenly worlds.  
Satan fought untiringly against this order.  
God's actions were aimed at maintaining this order.

**Therefore God created the Earth.**

From the very beginning,  
this Earth was involved  
in the dispute over Gospel Order.

God wanted to confirm  
Gospel Order by creating  
man in His image.

Satan wanted to destroy  
Gospel Order by causing  
man to fall.

**Therefore,**

Satan came to this Earth  
in order to continue his struggle.

“He was cast to the earth,  
and his angels were cast out with him.”

*Revelation 12:9*

## 9. As It Is in Heaven

**W**HEN Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He revealed to them the secret of true power. Through prayer they could connect themselves with the omnipotent God. He alone is the Creator and Father of us all, His name—character—alone is holy, and His kingdom transcends every other kingdom. When His will is done on earth, exactly as it is in heaven, nothing can stand in the way of the happiness of His creatures.

### **Matthew 6**

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

It is beyond the ability of both humans and angels to alter God's will—there is nothing they can do to change it in any way.

### **Malachi 3**

<sup>6</sup> I the Lord do not change.

### **James 1**

<sup>17</sup> ...the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning who does not change like shifting shadows.

No one can change the will of God.

### **Romans 9**

<sup>19</sup> For who has resisted His will?

<sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?

Even if His creatures choose a different way, God's will remains the same, and will eventually come to pass.

### **Isaiah 55**

<sup>10</sup> For as the rain comes down...

<sup>11</sup> So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Since it is a fact that the will of God is done, regardless of our cooperation, and since we cannot make this outcome more certain by our prayers, the question arises as to why we should pray for His will to be done.

God has given us the freedom to choose another way than the one He intends for us. For even though God's will cannot be changed, He grants to all His intelligent creatures the freedom of choice. For example, Israel was able to choose between the way of blessing and the way of cursing (see *Deuteronomy* 30:1). We also read,

### **Joshua 24**

<sup>15</sup> Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.

And Jesus gave His disciples a choice when He asked,

### **John 6**

<sup>67</sup> Do you also want to go away?

When we pray that God's will be done, then we are making our choice and actually expressing our desire to come into harmony with that will. We recognize that God desires only the best for us, and through our prayer we express our trust in Him, as well as our desire to obey Him because we love Him.

When we permit God's will to be carried out in our lives, His character will be revealed in us, and His law—Gospel Order—will be planted in our hearts. Only then will this order be as natural for us as it is for the angels in heaven.

## **God's Will in Heaven**

It is astonishing to see what people can achieve through their willpower. They can overcome sickness and weakness, they can get their way despite the majority being against them, they can master difficult circumstances, and they can rule over and tyrannize others.

But when the oppressed set their will in opposition to the

oppressor, the result is a power struggle whose outcome is often violent. This is a well-known scenario. We are familiar with this procedure in political, social, and family spheres when someone tries to force their will on others. If the dominant person has enough strength or perseverance, they can usually get their own way.

### **Psalm 50**

<sup>21</sup> These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you.

Because we assume that God exercises His will in the same way that human beings do, we imagine God involved in a battle in which force is the last resort. And professing Christians have often interpreted the Lord's prayer in such a way.

The Inquisition, and similar bodies in all ages, are a perfect example of this. The Crusaders thought that God's will could be carried out only by the use of their sword. And even statesmen of today believe that they have to use their influence in order to enforce God's will.

But nothing could be further from God's intentions than to use force.

### **2 Corinthians 9**

<sup>7</sup> So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 759:**

Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love.

If God were to compel His creatures to be obedient, then there could never have been a rebellion of any kind. But under the rule of force, heaven would not be a place where true happiness could develop, for true happiness can be found only where there is freedom. We read, for example, of Israel,

## **1 Chronicles 29**

<sup>9</sup> Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the Lord; and King David also rejoiced greatly.

The church of God on earth is a picture of the church in heaven, as it is written,

### **Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:**

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality....In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.

The angels are neither oppressed slaves, nor dull, though efficient, robots who have been programmed to do the right thing, namely the will of their Creator. If we consider what the so-called intelligent robots of today can do, it is quite amazing. And we can imagine their doing even greater feats still. Yet no matter how well they are programmed, one thing will always be lacking—the ability to choose between right and wrong on the basis of their own free will. Robots will never be able to obey out of love for the Creator, or choose disobedience through the exercise of self-will.

By contrast, the angels do not carry out God's will automatically—their obedience is an expression of their own free choice. This choice is based on their understanding of good and evil, of right and wrong. They trust that God is loving, gracious, and righteous, because they have experienced it, and they are more than happy to obey Him. That is why it is written,

### **Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:**

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect

unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed,

**Psalms 40**

<sup>8</sup> I delight in doing your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

This statement explains how the will of God is done in heaven. The angels serve through their own free choice, not because they are forced to, but voluntarily, and with joy.

In contrast to this, do we understand what “the spirit of legality” is? As the phrase itself implies, there is use of force involved instead of voluntary service. But the law itself cannot exercise any force, so the law must be enforced by someone. Who could that be? As we have already seen, God never uses force. As we just read:

When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.

In other words, an awareness of the law can be a source of compulsion. An angel, or a human being, who is aware of the claims of the law, can try to force themselves to obey. This kind of obedience is described in:

**Romans 7**

<sup>21</sup> I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

<sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

<sup>23</sup> But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Such legality can never produce true obedience, as this scripture shows. And the obedience that the angels render is not rooted in legality, but comes as the result of their being in harmony with the Creator. Because they have Gospel Order in

their hearts, they act accordingly.

### **Psalm 40**

<sup>8</sup> I delight to do your will, O my God, and your law is within my heart.

## **Is Gospel Order Needed in Heaven?**

### **Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:**

When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.

If the angels have the will of God in their hearts, why do they need a messenger to inform them of it? Surely it is possible for everyone to carry out God's will automatically, without the need of commands or instructions?

This view appears to be logical at first sight, but it overlooks a very important fact. God's creatures need not only to be in harmony with Him, they also need wisdom. Without this they would end up going their own, independent ways, separated from the Creator.

But it is impossible for any finite creature to possess the infinite wisdom of God. Divine wisdom is imparted through a continual stream of revelations enabling both angels and humanity to receive greater supplies day by day. Only when God's creatures are in harmony with Him, and are led by the wisdom that comes to them through the channel of Gospel Order, can they be truly obedient.

The following examples demonstrate that without Gospel Order, even sinless, unfallen creatures are incapable of carrying out God's will.

### **Revelation 7**

<sup>1</sup> After these things I saw four angels standing at the four



corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

The four winds are symbolic of the catastrophes that are ready to fall on the earth from every corner, and wreak tremendous destruction. But because of their love for humanity, four angels keep these winds in check. Their hearts are in harmony with God's heart, which also loves us and wants to protect us from harm.

But there is another side to the story. Humanity is rejecting God more and more, and they are approaching the point where the winds can no longer be held back because of their refusal to accept God and His ministry. When this rejection becomes complete, the four winds will have to be released. Although their hearts are in harmony with God, the angels need clear directives for their work until this point of time is reached. That is why John saw...

### **Revelation 7**

<sup>2</sup> ...another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.

<sup>3</sup> And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

### **Early Writings, p. 38:**

I saw four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and were on their way to accomplish it. Jesus was clothed with priestly garments. He gazed in pity on the remnant, then raised His hands, and with a voice of deep pity cried, "My blood, Father, my blood, my blood, my blood!"

Then I saw an exceeding bright light come from God, who sat upon the great white throne, and was shed all about Jesus. Then I saw an angel with a commission from Jesus, swiftly flying to the four angels who had a work to do on the earth, and waving something up and down in his hand, and crying with a loud voice, "Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold! Until the

servants of God are sealed in their foreheads.”

A further example is found during the time when Jesus lived on earth. Although they were not usually seen by other people, angels accompanied the Saviour and ministered to Him in different ways. When Jesus was whipped, shortly before His crucifixion, angels were present in the room and witnessed the scene.

**Early Writings, p. 170:**

It was difficult for the angels to endure the sight.

That is understandable, for the angels loved the Saviour, and in this they were in harmony with God. But what should they do? If they had listened to what their hearts told them, they would have freed Jesus.

They would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them, saying that it was a great ransom which was to be paid for man; but it would be complete and would cause the death of him who had the power of death.

In this case, their deliverance of Christ would not have been in accordance with God’s wisdom.

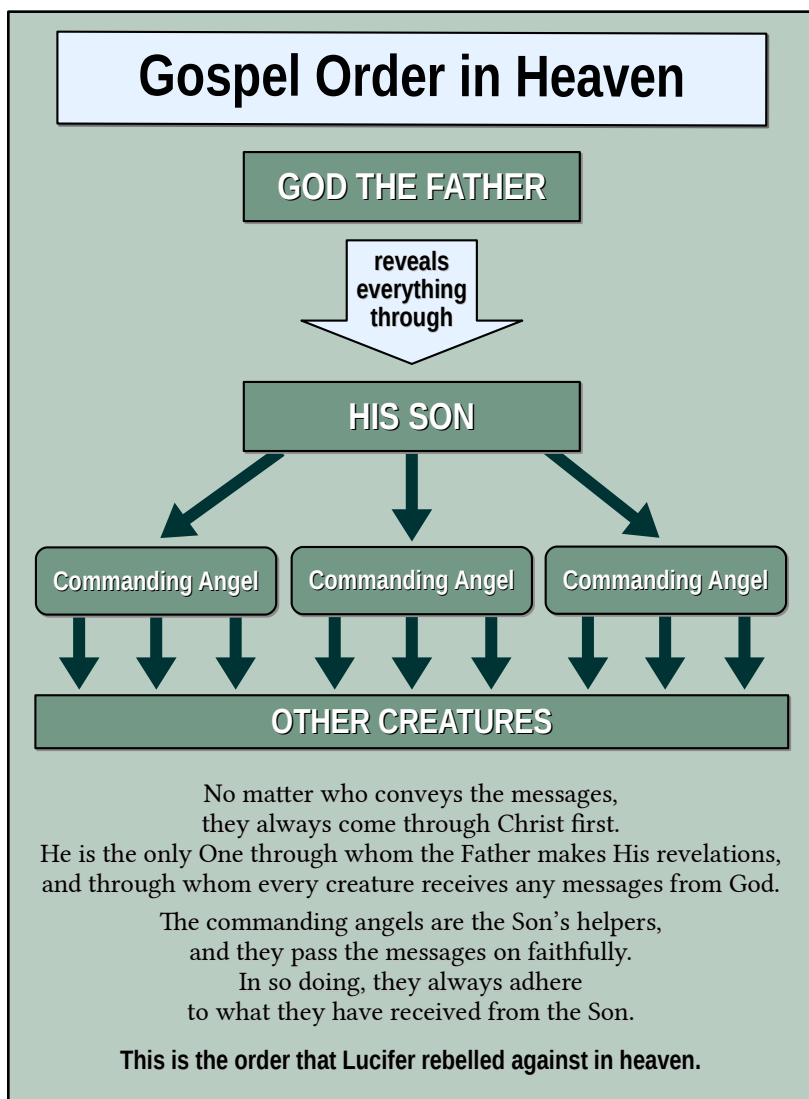
These examples show that it is not enough to have the will of God in the heart, for even the sinless angels need a continual revelation of it. It is essential for us to accept both of these conditions—having the will of God in our hearts, as well as a continual revelation of it—in order to keep us from the wrong concept that anyone who is mature enough knows what to do, and what not to do, and therefore does not need any more messages.

In heaven, Lucifer tried to question Gospel Order with the following argument:

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:**

He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels,

being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God Himself to err.



One Bible verse that is sometimes quoted as proof of this false concept is the following:

## **Jeremiah 31**

<sup>34</sup> No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

This text is quoted in the New Testament, in *Hebrews* 8:11, in connection with the old and new covenants. In the old covenant the people are not taught correctly. They say, “Know the Lord,” but those who say this have not known the Lord themselves, and therefore they cannot lead others to a true knowledge of God.

### **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 550:**

Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life.

### **Gospel Workers, p. 130:**

These men have a religion of the head, but their hearts are not sanctified by the truths they hear. Such can never lead others to the Fountain of living waters until they have drunk of the stream themselves.

This is the condition of those who are in the old covenant, through which no one can be saved. But the new covenant offers a completely different foundation. There is no place here for the spirit of legality. In the new covenant, individuals have a genuine connection with God. They know the Lord from their own experience, and therefore they do not need to be told, “Know the Lord.” This is what God wants to reveal to us through the prophet Jeremiah.

It does not mean that the believers in the new covenant no longer need the law or further messages to lead them in the path of light. Quite the opposite is true. They have the law in their hearts and continue to need living messages that are borne to them by a life that abides in the truth. The need for these living messages, in contrast to the dead messages of the

old covenant, will never end.

## **How did Gospel Order Become a Test?**

### **Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:**

When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.

Gospel Order was definitely not a test for the angels in heaven before Lucifer rebelled. A test is always connected with a decision, and we either pass or fail that test.

Let us take breathing and eating as an example. Under normal conditions, whether we breathe or not is neither a test nor a personal decision. We breathe automatically, even when we are sleeping. But the question of whether we eat healthy or unhealthy foods is a test for many people. Only those who have become fully accustomed to healthy food will have no desire for unhealthy foods.

Before the fall, Gospel Order was as natural for the angels as breathing is for us. But then Lucifer became proud. He strove for Christ's position, which became increasingly desirable to him. This is the vicious circle of jealousy. The more a forbidden object becomes the theme of our thoughts, and even our conversation, the more desirable it becomes.

In the case of Lucifer, Gospel Order eventually came to be a test for him. But this does not mean that he had to fall. He could have stood the test, for God offered to help him. He called a counsel in heaven and explained Gospel Order so clearly that Lucifer recognized it as being good and wanted to submit to it.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:**

The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ,

and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them, but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice, and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy. The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended in melodious strains, swelled by thousands of glad voices, the spirit of evil seemed vanquished; unutterable love thrilled his entire being; his soul went out, in harmony with the sinless worshipers, in love to the Father and the Son.

But Lucifer's test was not over, for the struggle rose in his heart once again.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:**

But again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged.

Finally, Lucifer failed in this test, which was so decisive for him.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39:**

He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error, that his imaginings were false, and to yield to the authority which he had been working to prove unjust.

Ever since Lucifer questioned it publicly, Gospel Order has been a test for every intelligent creature. All the angels were concerned with this question, as is evident from the fact that one third of them took Lucifer's side. And because it was a public battle for the entire universe, other worlds were also tested.<sup>38</sup>

For all the creatures that God subsequently created, Gospel Order had to be a test, because the circumstances of the rebellion in heaven had made this unavoidable. Even humanity could not be spared, which is why there was a tree of the

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<sup>38</sup> See *Early Writings*, p. 39.

knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**

Like the angels, the dwellers in Eden had been placed upon probation; their happy estate could be retained only on condition of fidelity to the Creator's law. They could obey and live, or disobey and perish.

**The Story of Redemption, p. 19:**

The Father consulted His Son in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth. He would place man upon probation to test his loyalty before he could be rendered eternally secure. If he endured the test wherewith God saw fit to prove him, he should eventually be equal with the angels. He was to have the favor of God, and he was to converse with angels, and they with him. He did not see fit to place them beyond the power of disobedience.

**After the Test is Passed**

When the test on Gospel Order has finally been passed, it will cease to be a test. In the book of *Revelation* we read how the heavenly angels view Gospel Order today. They do not consider that this is a test for them. Gospel Order is not a burden for them, but a cause of joy.

**Revelation 5**

<sup>1</sup> And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

This sealed book obviously contains important messages, which need to be conveyed to others. But the book cannot be unsealed until there is someone there who can convey the messages it contains.

**Revelation 5**

<sup>2</sup> Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?

A seal can be broken only by someone who has the authority to do so. This indicates a strict order—Gospel Order.

<sup>3</sup> And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

<sup>4</sup> So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

Even mourning such as is described here cannot change Gospel Order. Nevertheless, the heavenly beings are calm.

### **Revelation 5**

<sup>5</sup> But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.

<sup>6</sup> And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

The Lamb is Christ, the Son of the living God. John the Baptist had previously spoken of Him using this figure.

### **John 1**

<sup>29</sup> Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

The Son of God is the only One qualified to convey God's messages. That is Gospel Order in heaven.

### **Revelation 5**

<sup>7</sup> Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

Then follows a description of how heaven rejoices over Gospel Order.

<sup>8</sup> Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and



tongue and people and nation,

<sup>10</sup> And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

<sup>12</sup> Saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

<sup>13</sup> And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!

<sup>14</sup> Then the four living creatures said, Amen! And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

## God's Will be Done on Earth

God wants His will to be done on earth just as it is in heaven. And when we pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we are asking God to establish the same order on earth as exists in heaven, and that it will be welcomed with the same joy.

In this prayer we express exactly the same wish that Jesus has, and therefore we pray in Christ's name.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 680:**

Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth. Thus in His people He is glorified. Through them the Sun of Righteousness will shine in undimmed luster to the world.

Christ has given to His church ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. He has bestowed upon His people capabilities and blessings that they may represent His own sufficiency. The church, endowed with the righteousness of

Christ, is His depositary, in which the riches of His mercy, His grace, and His love, are to appear in full and final display.

Christ looks upon His people in their purity and perfection, as the reward of His humiliation, and the supplement of His glory,—Christ, the great Center, from whom radiates all glory.

How does the Creator desire to see Gospel Order functioning on this earth? In their sinless condition, Adam and Eve differed only slightly from the angels. The Bible tells us that they were created...

### **Hebrews 2**

<sup>7</sup> ...a little lower than the angels.

This implies that they were able to communicate freely with the angels, and that they, like the angels, were able to speak with God in Christ.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

### **Ministry of Healing, p. 261:**

Adam and Eve, in their untainted purity, delighted in the sights and sounds of Eden. God appointed them their work in the garden, “to dress it and to keep it.” *Genesis* 2:15. Each day’s labor brought them health and gladness, and the happy pair greeted with joy the visits of their Creator, as in the cool of the day He walked and talked with them. Daily God taught them His lessons.

### **Education, p. 21:**

In His interest for His children, our heavenly Father personally directed their education. Often they were visited by His messengers, the holy angels, and from them received counsel and instruction. Often as they walked in the garden in the cool of the day they heard the voice of God, and face to face held communion with the Eternal. His thoughts toward them were “thoughts of peace, and not of evil.”

*Jeremiah* 29:11. His every purpose was their highest good.

According to the principle of Gospel Order, it was Christ, the Son of God, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, who spoke with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day.

### **Colossians 2**

<sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The following statement clearly shows that it was Christ who spoke with Adam.

### **The Story of Redemption, p. 47:**

And must it be that heaven's honored Commander, who had walked with him and talked with him while in his holy innocence, whom angels honored and worshiped, must be brought down from his exalted position to die because of his transgression?

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 281-282:**

In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day.

Sometimes, Christ also used the angels as His helpers to communicate messages to them. But to be able to speak personally with the Son of God was always something special for Adam and Eve.

Nevertheless, it was still a test for them whether they would be really obedient to the messages that came to them through the channels of Christ and the angels. They were informed of the existence of Satan, and it was also explained to them why there was a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Through Gospel Order, that is, through Christ and His helpers, Adam and Eve were also told how they could stand the test.

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52-53:**

Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government, which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow.

The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers. But should they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone.

Our first parents were therefore aware of Gospel Order. They also knew the Messenger, through whom God communicated His messages. This knowledge was vital to them, as they needed to be able to recognize the true Messenger, since there was also a false messenger who was to be avoided.

For Adam and Eve, everything depended on their clinging exclusively to the primary and secondary messengers that God had given them. These servants were always at their disposal whenever they should need them, and they gave Adam and Eve all the information they needed so that God's will for them could be carried out.

We can readily see that Gospel Order was established on this earth at creation. But God intended to give even more than is apparent at first sight. As we studied in the last chapter, human beings were created in the image of God. Similarly, the earth was formed in the image of heaven. Our small world was an illustration of the larger world, and it was to serve the

angels as a lesson book. This law of correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm is also revealed in nature.

God intended to make our first parents special helpers for Christ on this earth, just as the commanding angels were for Him in heaven. God planned to rule over this planet through Adam and Eve, and in harmony with Gospel Order Christ desired to convey His messages through them to every subsequent generation. Just as the Son of God had a special position in heaven, which Lucifer coveted but could not be given, so Adam's position on this earth was to be of a special nature. As the father of humankind he was to be our "commanding angel."

In his relationship to Christ and the heavenly angels, Adam was a secondary messenger. In his relationship to humanity he was destined to be a primary messenger, just as the Son of God is.

### **Romans 5**

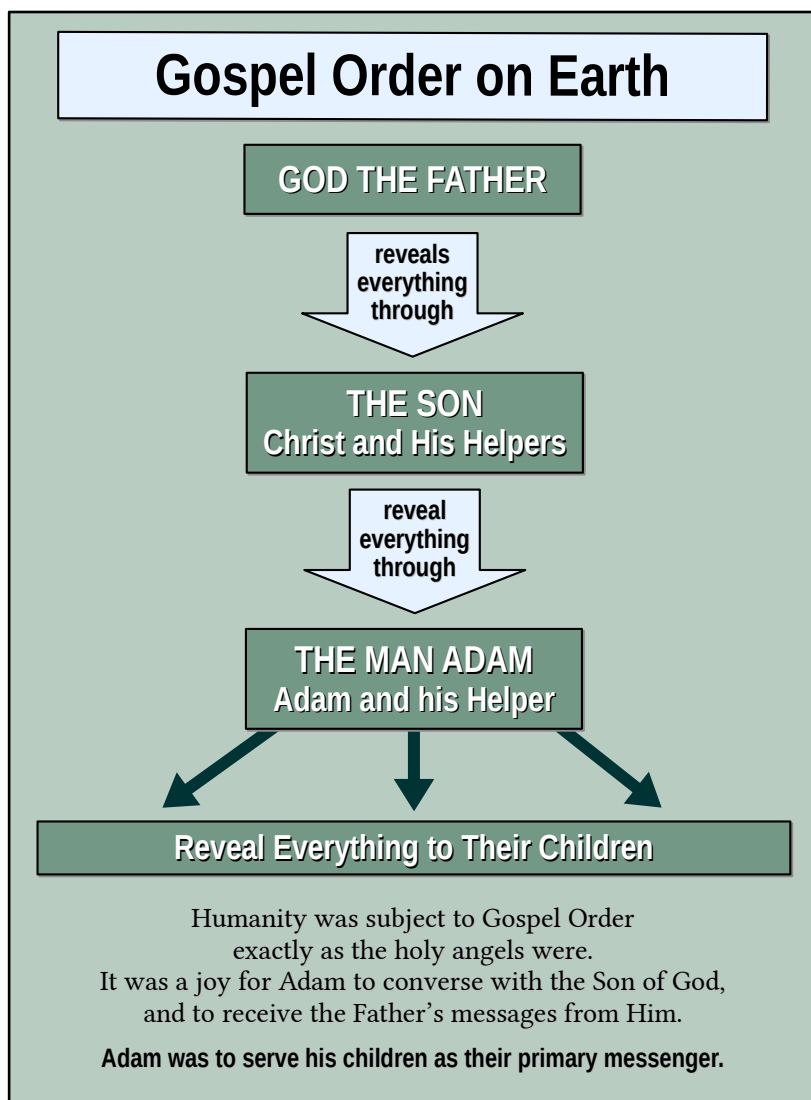
<sup>14</sup> Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Adam's obedience to Christ and His helpers was a revelation of the extent to which he loved Gospel Order. In this way, all of Adam's posterity would be given the same test that Lucifer had in heaven. Would they wholeheartedly accept the fact that God gave them His messages through Adam? Would they obey the messages that were communicated to them through their primary messenger?

If anyone were to develop the tendency for self-exaltation, then this order would become a very difficult test for that person, just as Christ's position in heaven became a very difficult test for Lucifer. But for those who willingly submitted to this order, it ceased to be a test. Their eternal security was guaranteed, as long as they continued to submit and obey.

From the very beginning, it was the purpose of God and His Son to make this earth a model of the universe, which would

be ruled according to Gospel Order. If Adam had submitted to this order, much suffering would have been avoided—for him and for the rest of humanity. If he had prayed, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (*Matthew 6:10*), the unfortunate apostasy of human beings would never have taken place.



But sin gained the rulership of this earth. Satan was successful in drawing humanity onto his side, and inciting them to rebellion against Gospel Order.

So what has become of heaven's order now, and what use is the sin-filled earth today? Although God's plan has been severely hindered by the intervention of sin, it is still true that

**The Desire of Ages, p. 680:**

Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth.





## 10. The Rebellion on Earth

SATAN uses whatever means he can to ensure that God's will is not done on earth as it is in heaven. He appeared to succeed in this mission in the Garden of Eden, where he managed to draw humanity onto his side. By doing so he established rebellion against Gospel Order on earth just as he had done in heaven.

### The Way to Rebellion

If Adam and Eve had stayed on the path of Gospel Order they would have been safe. The word which had been given to them through God's messengers would have kept them from danger. They had been warned, and were given special instructions about how they could protect themselves from the tempter. All they had to do was to accept the word and trust it.

#### Genesis 2

<sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

<sup>17</sup> But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

As we have already seen, God's word came to Adam and Eve through the Primary Messenger, Christ, and his angel helpers, the secondary messengers. This was the way they learned the conditions under which they would be safe. We can list these conditions with the help of the following quotations.

#### Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52:

Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government, which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**

The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers. But should they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.

Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone.

In another place we read,

**Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, p. 39:**

They cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. If one of them were alone, they would be in greater danger than if both were together.

We can summarize the instructions that Adam and Eve were given as follows:

1. They were to confine themselves to the messengers that God had appointed, and whom He had made known to them: Christ as the Primary Messenger, and the angels as secondary messengers.
2. They were to be on their guard against self-appointed messengers.
3. If in danger they should call for help. If necessary, every angel would come to their aid.

4. They were to firmly reject any suggestions from self-appointed messengers.
5. They were not to go near the forbidden tree because this was where the false messenger could exercise his influence.
6. They were not to investigate the nature of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, nor to eat of its fruit.
7. They were to be content with God's instructions.
8. They should not separate from each other because they would be in less danger together than alone.

Not one of the points in this list is superfluous. The path of Gospel Order could only be adhered to by obeying these rules.

### **Important Principles of Gospel Order for Adam and Eve, and for Us**

1. God appoints both primary and secondary messengers, and makes them known to us.
2. We need to beware of self-appointed messengers.
3. If we are in danger we should call upon God and His messengers.
4. We should firmly reject any suggestions from self-appointed messengers.
5. We should not put ourselves within the sphere of influence of false messengers.
6. We should not try to understand false messages, or give them room in our hearts.
7. We should be content with the messages God gives us and concentrate on them.
8. We should not separate ourselves from faithful believers (*Hebrews 10:25*).

For a time, Adam and Eve kept to what God had said, but

then they broke one of the principles, and this led, step by step, to the transgression of them all.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53-54:**

[Eve was so] absorbed in her pleasing task, [that] she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger...

We may excuse Eve's unwitting separation from her husband, but her reaction to the warning of the Holy Spirit was obviously a transgression of the principles.

Like Lucifer in heaven, and so many people today, Eve thought that it was not necessary to be so strict in observing Gospel Order. She thought that since her nature was pure she did not need any restrictions. Was she not in harmony with God? Why did she need to be in Adam's company all the time? Could she not stand alone? And why should she, who was perfect, keep to the word of the Messenger? So, instead of turning to her husband and the angels for help,

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:**

[She] dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels' caution...

Eve's separation from Adam had now become a conscious step. She had rejected the warning of the true heavenly Messenger, and therefore was no longer safe from the false messenger. The next transgression soon followed.

...she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree.

Eve was now standing in the only place where the false messenger could exercise his influence over her. But even before he began to speak, Eve transgressed another two rules of Gospel Order. She became discontented with God's directions, and she began to investigate the nature of the tree.

The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with her-

self why God had withheld it from them.

This question clearly shows that doubts concerning Gospel Order had arisen in Eve's mind. Could it be that the Messenger had made a mistake? Eve no longer wanted to rely on the message itself but on her own wisdom. First, she had disregarded God's word and separated herself from Adam, and now she was in disharmony with God. Full of curiosity, she turned to the tree in an attempt to find out what was so special about it. She was now an easy prey for Satan.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

Satan did not speak to Eve directly, but used a messenger. The serpent itself was not deceitful, but it was intelligent.<sup>39</sup> It was different in form, and much more beautiful than the serpents of today, and that is why Satan used it.<sup>40</sup>

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**

In order to accomplish his work unperceived, Satan chose to employ as his medium the serpent—a disguise well adapted for his purpose of deception. The serpent was then one of the wisest and most beautiful creatures on the earth.

Satan was also very intelligent, but he did not use this gift as His Creator had intended. Instead, he used his intelligence

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<sup>39</sup> The Hebrew word (*aruwm*) means “wise, prudent” as well as “crafty, subtle.”

<sup>40</sup> It was not a creature from this earth that tempted Eve, but Satan himself, as the word of God shows in the following texts: *John* 8:44; *2 Corinthians* 11:3, 14; *Romans* 16:20; *Revelation* 12:9; *Revelation* 20:2. Satan used this creature for his own purposes, which is why he is also referred to as the serpent. In this respect, the Bible references to Satan as a dragon are also interesting: *Revelation* 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; *Revelation* 13:2, 4; *Revelation* 20:2. According to *Isaiah* 14:29 and 30:6, a dragon can fly. Therefore, the serpent in Paradise obviously had wings with which it could fly. See *The Story of Redemption*, p. 32 and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53.

to deceive humanity, which is why he is called the “father of lies.” *John* 8:44. After Eve had already transgressed several principles of Gospel Order, Satan saw that his opportunity had come.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:**

As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: “Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts.

When a person transgresses Gospel Order, nothing is so pleasing to them as someone else who encourages them to continue in this way. The one now speaking to Eve was not the messenger that God had given her, but then, she did not even notice that someone else was claiming to be a messenger. To all appearances this was simply a little social contact with a creature from this earth who, to Eve’s surprise, was also able to speak. Furthermore, the serpent was complimenting her.

But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing.

Eve should have immediately noticed that someone was claiming to be a messenger because their conversation was about God’s message. The serpent had misconstrued God’s words. He indirectly represented God as someone who was laying restrictions on humanity through Gospel Order. God’s prohibition actually referred to only one tree, but the serpent implied that it referred to all the trees in the garden. He was in fact saying,

“Can that really be true? Your messengers must be mistaken about this!”

The doubts suggested by the serpent from without now mingled with the doubts she had within. Eve had already

asked herself this question, and now she was invited to join in a discussion on the subject. This was the point where Gospel Order became a decisive test for Eve. She could still turn back, but,

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:**

Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak.

The self-sent messenger had approached her in a way that she had not expected, and she was deceived.

Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe.

Instead of rejecting these deceptive suggestions, Eve entered into a conversation with the serpent.

**Genesis 3**

<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

<sup>3</sup> But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.

Eve's transgression was clearly reflected in her words. She did not even notice that the message she passed on was false. She was no longer a faithful channel. What she said was not what she had been told. The message had become subject to Eve's corrupted interpretation. She does not call the forbidden tree by its name, but simply refers to it as the "tree in the midst of the garden." In doing so she diminished the danger of the tree—she put it into the same category as all the other trees.

Furthermore, God had said that they would surely die if they ate from the fruit. He did not say that they might die, or that they would die if they simply touched the fruit. In her in-

terpretation, Eve detracted from the meaning of God's word by saying that death was only a possibility,<sup>41</sup> and she also added to it by referring to the touching of the fruit as a transgression.

Under these circumstances it was an easy matter for Satan to lead Eve to transgress another principle of Gospel Order. Sure of his success, he claimed that,

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>4</sup> You will not surely die.

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

In this statement, Satan gave a message that obviously contradicted the message God had given through His Messenger. But Eve did not reflect on her situation. Instead of calling the angels to her aid, which would have signified her recognition of the true messengers, she calmly ignored the contradiction. She had separated herself from Gospel Order to such an extent that even open criticism of God did not alert her to the danger she was in!

In his statement, the serpent not only contradicted the word of God, but backed up his assertion with an argument. According to him, the cause of this enormous mistake must lie in God's or His messengers' motives. Satan insinuated that God, His Son, and His servants, were motivated in exactly the same way that he was.

It was Satan who wanted to rule over others and keep them down, so as to ensure his own exaltation. He despised the selfless spirit of heaven, which is the foundation of Gospel Order and of God's actions. And he was willing to use any

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<sup>41</sup> This thought is clearly expressed in the original Hebrew text. The expression of a shock at these consequences is hidden beneath a kind of cynicism. This shows that Eve no longer feared the word of God, but merely the consequences. See also Chapter 4, "The Reliability of the Channel," and the sections following after it.



means in order to gain his objective.

It sounds very flattering when someone tells us that transgression of Gospel Order will make us free, more intelligent, and more independent. But this does not release us from our duty of clearly recognizing and rejecting the temptation that lies hidden in these words.

How many people today are caught in the same snare that Satan lay in the very beginning! How many reject Gospel Order for the same reasons that Eve did!

## **2 Corinthians 11**

<sup>3</sup> But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54–55:**

Such has been Satan's work from the days of Adam to the present, and he has pursued it with great success. He tempts men to distrust God's love and to doubt His wisdom. He is constantly seeking to excite a spirit of irreverent curiosity, a restless, inquisitive desire to penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom and power.

In their efforts to search out what God has been pleased to withhold, multitudes overlook the truths which He has revealed, and which are essential to salvation. Satan tempts men to disobedience by leading them to believe they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. But this is all a deception. Elated with their ideas of progression, they are, by trampling on God's requirements, setting their feet in the path that leads to degradation and death.

Satan represented to the holy pair that they would be gainers by breaking the law of God. Do we not today hear similar reasoning? Many talk of the narrowness of those who obey God's commandments, while they themselves claim to have broader ideas and to enjoy greater liberty. What is this but an echo of the voice from Eden, "In the day you eat thereof"—transgress the divine requirement—"you shall be as gods"?

Satan claimed to have received great good by eating of the forbidden fruit, but he did not let it appear that by transgression he had become an outcast from heaven. Though he had found sin to result in infinite loss, he concealed his own misery in order to draw others into the same position.

So now the transgressor seeks to disguise his true character; he may claim to be holy; but his exalted profession only makes him the more dangerous as a deceiver. He is on the side of Satan, trampling upon the law of God, and leading others to do the same, to their eternal ruin.

If we would be content with the messages that God gives us, we could be saved from making such mistakes. Indeed, God has given His people a rich treasure, but it is necessary to dig deeply for it. The people of God must apply effort, perseverance, and self-denial, in order to find the treasure.

Those who do find it wonder how it is possible to be interested in anything else. But those who make no effort see nothing special that might claim their affections.

## **The Rebellion Confirmed**

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise...

The more Eve deviated from the path of Gospel Order, the harder the test was, until she could no longer withstand the temptation to eat the forbidden fruit. Her whole being—her eyes, her taste, her thirst for knowledge—now desired an action that would put the seal on her rebellion.

Although Eve had already gone so far, it was not too late to turn back. The Lord had clearly defined which decisive step would inevitably lead to death—eating the fruit of the tree. It was not because the fruit was poisonous that this step was fatal, but because it would be visible to all that humanity had chosen the path of rebellion. Every step thus far had either

been in her mind, or been expressed in undefined terms. But the eating of the fruit was an action that revealed unequivocally which side Eve was standing on.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>6</sup> She took of its fruit and ate.

Eve's actions provided a clear statement of her stand. And yet we need to ask if she was aware, at that time, that she had taken the decisive, visible step of rebellion against Gospel Order. The answer from the Scriptures is, "No." Eve did not realize what she had done.

### **1 Timothy 2**

<sup>14</sup> But the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Under these circumstances, should Eve have been made responsible for her actions? And if so, to what extent? Was it really rebellion? Today, many people excuse their actions by saying that they were taken by surprise, and that it was not their intention to rebel. Such excuses make it easy for Satan to deceive them again. Eve made herself responsible for her actions by leaving the safe path of Gospel Order. This was not an unconscious step. Nor did she have to fall.

### **John 11**

<sup>9</sup> If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

Eve had left the path of day, and therefore it became night for her. The scripture tells us the unavoidable consequences of such a step.

<sup>10</sup> But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.

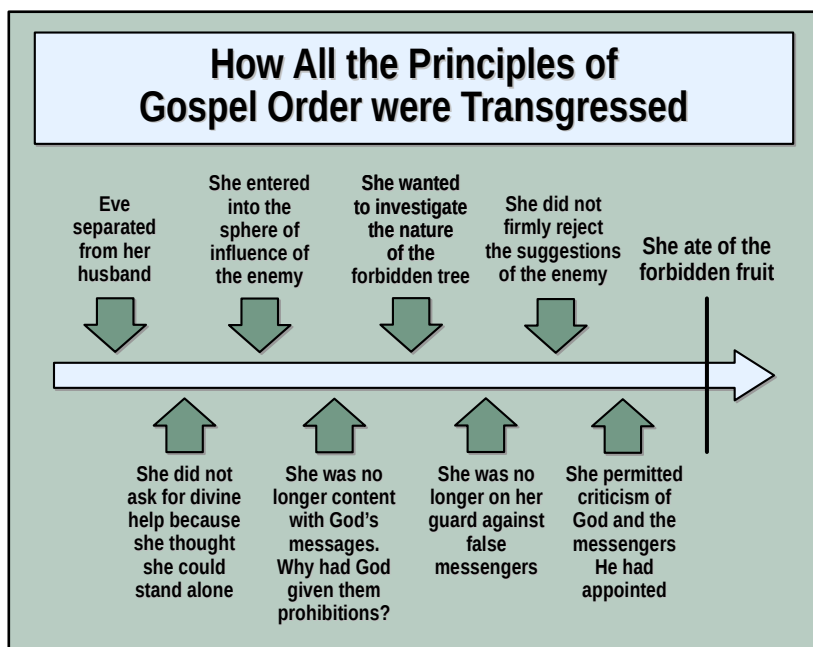
Those who stay on the path of Gospel Order will certainly not fall, but those who leave it will just as surely come to ruin.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 55:**

Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did

not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth.

Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan.



Eve was deceived when she ate of the fruit, and consequently she really imagined herself rising to a higher level of freedom and self-fulfillment.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 55:**

[The fruit] was grateful to the taste, and as she ate, she

seemed to feel a vivifying power, and imagined herself entering upon a higher state of existence.

In this condition she returned to Adam.

### **1 Timothy 2**

<sup>14</sup> And Adam was not deceived...

In other words, Adam understood very well what Eve's actions meant.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 56:**

Adam understood that his companion had transgressed the command of God, disregarded the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love.

Now he too was tested as to whether he would remain faithful to the word of God, as given to him through God's Primary Messenger and His helpers. Up to this point he had not left the path of Gospel Order, and so we would expect him to remain firm. But this was not the case. What then, caused his fall? The Bible says,

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>6</sup> She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

According to God's original plan, Eve was supposed to be Adam's helper. God had said,

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>18</sup> I will make him a helper comparable to him.

But instead of being his helper she became his tempter! Satan had used the serpent as a medium—a false messenger—in order to reach Eve. But in Adam's case, Eve became the false messenger whom Satan used to bring about his fall. The serpent would not have been an instrument of temptation for Adam, but he loved Eve and thought that he could not bear the thought of being separated from her.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 56:**

There was a terrible struggle in his mind. He mourned that

he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her whose society had been his joy. How could he have it thus? Adam had enjoyed the companionship of God and of holy angels. He had looked upon the glory of the Creator. He understood the high destiny opened to the human race should they remain faithful to God.

Yet all these blessings were lost sight of in the fear of losing that one gift which in his eyes outvalued every other. Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation. He did not realize that the same Infinite Power who had from the dust of the earth created him, a living, beautiful form, and had in love given him a companion, could supply her place. He resolved to share her fate; if she must die, he would die with her.

So then, it was love for Eve that caused Adam's fall. How can love be a means of causing a person to fall into sin? Can something which is good be used to do something evil? If love leads to a transgression of God's order then it is no longer pure and good. That is why Paul wrote,

### **Romans 12**

<sup>9</sup> Let love be without hypocrisy.

In another place, the apostle also writes of different kinds of love.

### **2 Corinthians 8**

<sup>8</sup> I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

Love must be joined with knowledge and obedience if it is to be the right kind of love.

### **Philippians 1**

<sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.

Love without obedience, without Gospel Order, is different

from the love which God has, and which He desires to give His children. Love that values the gift more than the Giver is a wrong kind of love. In the final analysis, it is only self-love.

Adam tried to avoid being separated from Eve by disregarding God's commandments. But sin separates people from one another, and therefore the peace and joy of their marriage was broken up. Instead of saving his marriage, Adam only confirmed his and Eve's ruin when he transgressed Gospel Order.

If his love had been of the right kind, he would have obeyed the message that God had given him through His Messenger:

- By his faithfulness to Gospel Order he would have firmly resisted the suggestions of the false messenger;
- In the realization of his need he would have called an angel to his aid;
- In his appreciation of God and His servants he would not have been led to place the gift above the Giver, but would have remained content with God's ways;
- By faith he would have realized that God had a solution to the problem of separation;
- When suddenly confronted with the forbidden fruit, he would have immediately withdrawn from the influence of the false message instead of thinking of his own loss;
- He would have resisted Eve's arguments and rejected the fruit, because this was the only way he could prove his love for Eve and really serve her!

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 56:**

He did not realize that the same Infinite Power who had from the dust of the earth created him, a living, beautiful form, and had in love given him a companion, could supply her place.

In other words, he did not realize that God's way of Gospel Order was also sufficient for emergencies. How God would have supplied Eve's place is not explained, but we know that

Jesus would have died for even one single person. Unfortunately, Adam chose the wrong way, and the sad story of transgression of Gospel Order on this earth began.

### **Romans 5**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

## **Consequences of Transgression**

Although both Adam and Eve at first thought they had reached a higher level of existence by eating the fruit, quite the opposite was the case, as they soon realized.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Of Adam we read,

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 57:**

But soon the thought of his sin filled him with terror. The air, which had hitherto been of a mild and uniform temperature, seemed to chill the guilty pair. The love and peace which had been theirs was gone, and in its place they felt a sense of sin, a dread of the future, a nakedness of soul. The robe of light which had enshrouded them, now disappeared, and to supply its place they endeavored to fashion for themselves a covering; for they could not, while unclothed, meet the eye of God and holy angels.

The immediate result of the transgression of Gospel Order was disharmony, both towards one another and towards God.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>12</sup> The woman...gave me of the tree, and I ate.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 57:**

Adam reproached his companion...

This was nothing less than an attempt to move the responsi-



bility for his transgression away from himself.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 58:**

The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies; it was indulged by our first parents as soon as they yielded to the influence of Satan, and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Instead of humbly confessing their sins, they try to shield themselves by casting the blame upon others, upon circumstances, or upon God—making even His blessings an occasion of murmuring against Him.

**Relationship Between Man and the Son of God**

The disharmony between Adam and Eve had its source in their disharmony with the Primary Messenger. The change in their relationship to Him was seen in their accusations of the Son of God.

**Genesis 3**

<sup>12</sup> The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.

In other words,

“I fell into sin because of the woman You gave me.”

Eve argued in the same way.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 58:**

“The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” “Why did You create the serpent? Why did You suffer him to enter Eden?”—these were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin.

Before their transgression of Gospel Order, it had been one of Adam and Eve’s greatest delights to commune with the Son of God.

**The Ministry of Healing, p. 261:**

Adam and Eve, in their untainted purity, delighted in the sights and sounds of Eden. God appointed them their work in the garden, “to dress it and to keep it.” *Genesis 2:15*. Each day’s labor brought them health and gladness, and the

happy pair greeted with joy the visits of their Creator, as in the cool of the day He walked and talked with them. Daily God taught them His lessons.

**Education, p. 21:**

In His interest for His children, our heavenly Father personally directed their education. Often they were visited by His messengers, the holy angels, and from them received counsel and instruction. Often as they walked in the garden in the cool of the day they heard the voice of God, and face to face held communion with the Eternal. His thoughts toward them were “thoughts of peace, and not of evil.”

*Jeremiah 29:11.* His every purpose was their highest good.

But now they were afraid of their Creator, and hid from Him.

**Genesis 3**

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Adam himself explained the reason for his hiding.

**Genesis 3**

<sup>10</sup> I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid...

His fear of the Primary Messenger has many parallels in the history of humanity. One such occasion was when the people of Israel were gathered at Mount Sinai.

**Exodus 20**

<sup>18</sup> Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

<sup>19</sup> Then they said to Moses, You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

This fear is not without reason. In our sinful condition, we cannot even bear the glory of the Son of God. Why is this?

The exalted glory of God, the light which nobody can approach, is embodied in Christ. However, Christ brings this glory close to every creature in a way that they can endure, and receive life from it.

Christ has borne this responsibility for all the sinless creatures throughout eternity, and He did so for Adam and Eve before their fall. But after their transgression there was such a disharmony between them and Christ that they could no longer bear His glory, therefore they ran away from Him. And they did this even though their lives depended on their communion with the Primary Messenger—the Son of God.

### **Access to the Tree of Life**

The tree of life in the middle of the garden was a very fitting explanation of the role of a primary messenger. As the channel through which God imparted life to human beings, this tree revealed the role of the primary messenger. There was only one, single tree of life in the garden, and it was accessible to all humanity.

In the same way, God has given us only one, single primary messenger. The tree of life is also a symbol for Christ, from whom Adam and Eve had to eat continually in order to sustain their spiritual lives.

#### **John 6**

<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life.

<sup>50</sup> This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

<sup>51</sup> If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

If Adam and Eve were to cease eating from the tree of life, they would then cease to live.

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 60:**

In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become ex-

tinct.

By eating from the tree of life they expressed their faith in God as the only Source of life, and in the channel of His choice as the only mediator of this life. Every meal taken from this tree strengthened their faith in Gospel Order. Before their transgression, Adam and Eve had free access to the tree of life. But after their fall their way to the tree was barred.

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said...And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever—

<sup>23</sup> Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden...

<sup>24</sup> ...and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

The “flaming sword”<sup>42</sup> was the glory, or light, of Christ—the true tree of life. The word of God is full of examples where light is a symbol for the presence of God, as the following statement shows:

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 464:**

In the manifestation of God to His people, light had ever been a symbol of His presence. At the creative word in the beginning, light had shone out of darkness. Light had been enshrouded in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, leading the vast armies of Israel. Light blazed with

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<sup>42</sup> “The phrase ‘a flaming sword’ is a rather inexact translation of the Hebrew, which reads literally ‘a glittering of the sword.’ There was no literal sword guarding the gate of Paradise. There was, rather, what appeared to be the scintillating reflection of light from a sword ‘turned every way’ with great rapidity—flashing shafts of light radiating from an intensely brilliant center. Furthermore, the form of the Hebrew verb *mithhappeketh*, rendered in the ‘turned every way,’ really means ‘turning itself every way.’ This verb form is used exclusively to express intensive, reflexive action, and requires in this instance the conclusion that the ‘sword’ appeared to whirl itself about. This radiant, living light was none other than the Shekinah glory, the manifestation of the divine presence.” F. D. Nichol, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 236.

awful grandeur about the Lord on Mount Sinai. Light rested over the mercy seat in the tabernacle. Light filled the temple of Solomon at its dedication. Light shone on the hills of Bethlehem when the angels brought the message of redemption to the watching shepherds.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 62:**

At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the divine glory was revealed. [see also *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 83]

The presence or glory of God was found at the tree of life, which was a symbol for the Son of God, right from the beginning. But this glory became a problem for humanity after they had sinned. However, it was not the glory of God but their sin that barred the way to the tree.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 107:**

To sin, wherever found, “our God is a consuming fire.” *Hebrews* 12:29.

It is sin that separates us from the Primary Messenger, that cannot bear His glory, and that cuts us off from life. This separation is the real cause of death. In the symbol of the tree of life, all the universe could see how necessary and essential Gospel Order is.

Although Satan was successful in drawing Adam and Eve onto his side, at the same time he also gave a demonstration to all creation of the consequences of transgressing Gospel Order. In fact, Satan actually strengthened Gospel Order and weakened his own cause—in so doing he totally missed the goal he had been aiming for!

But the Lord did not leave it at that. He manifested His love for humanity by giving us a second chance. How was this possible? Gospel Order, in which all life comes through the Primary Messenger, had been transgressed. So what could be done now?

## The Tree of Life Shows the Importance of the Primary Messenger

### The Tree of Life

### The Primary Messenger

The channel through which  
God's life flows

The channel through which  
God's message,—His life,—  
flows

It is the only tree  
that gives eternal life

It is the only channel through  
which God gives His messages

Eating from it expressed the  
faith that life from God came  
through the tree

Acceptance of God's  
messages is an expression of  
faith in Gospel Order

It was necessary to eat from  
the tree in order to live

Eternal life is dependent on the  
acceptance of God's messages  
through this channel

The flaming sword stood  
between the tree  
and sinful humanity

Sinful humanity cannot bear  
the glory of Christ

The branches of the tree  
hang over the wall

God brings His messages  
to fallen humanity  
through this channel

After humanity had rejected the messages which God had given through His Messenger, and had therefore rejected God, He did not give them a different messenger. The plan of salvation that God offered humanity was within the framework of Gospel Order. It is still the tree of life through which human-

ity receives life.

**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 989:**

After the entrance of sin, the heavenly Husbandman transplanted the tree of life to the Paradise above; but its branches hang over the wall to the lower world. Through the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, we may still eat of its life-giving fruit.

The Primary Messenger was to come to the earth “in the likeness of sinful flesh” *Romans* 8:3. The branches were to hang over the wall so that humanity could bear His glory. For this purpose Christ had to become a man with the same human nature that we have, to bear our sins and suffer the full consequences of sin.

This plan was opened to Adam and Eve in Paradise, when the Lord spoke to them about a Child of humanity who would bruise the serpent’s head. See *Genesis* 3:15. According to God’s plan, the Primary Messenger, through whom all creation lives, was to become this Child. What an amazing plan!

Until the Son of Man would be born, God provided humanity with a means of communication with Himself through the Primary Messenger. There was no alternative channel. In order to offer humanity a second chance, Christ willingly humbled Himself so that His glory would be sufficiently hidden to enable humanity to bear it.<sup>43</sup> When He finally became a Man, heaven drew nearer to earth than it ever had been before.

**The Desire of Ages, p. 116:**

At the Saviour’s baptism, Satan was among the witnesses. He saw the Father’s glory overshadowing His Son. He heard the voice of Jehovah testifying to the divinity of Jesus. Ever since Adam’s sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had

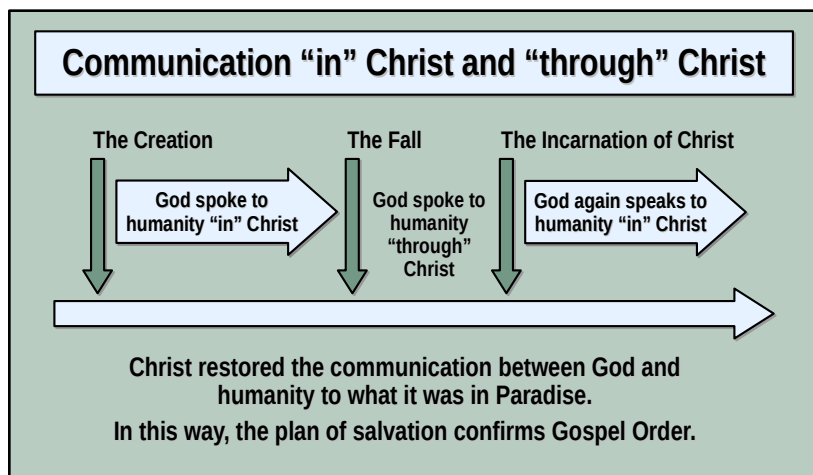
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<sup>43</sup> As an illustration of this, Moses, who was a type of Christ, also had to veil his face so that the people could bear the brightness of it. See *Exodus* 34:34-35.

come “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (*Romans* 8:3), the Father Himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity through Christ; now He communicated with humanity in Christ. Satan had hoped that God’s abhorrence of evil would bring an eternal separation between heaven and earth. But now it was manifest that the connection between God and man had been restored.

This statement clearly reveals that humanity communicated directly with God before the fall, and that sin cut off this possibility. The Father had spoken to Adam and Eve in Christ just as He now spoke to the people in Christ at His baptism. In the intervening period He had spoken to the people through Christ.

While the communication between the Father and humanity in Christ is obviously more direct than the communication through Christ, it is also obvious that both means of communication are in harmony with Gospel Order.



**The Desire of Ages, p. 331:**

Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness.



Gospel Order was in no way changed by the transgression of Gospel Order, nor by the plan of salvation. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. It became apparent that the order through which the life of every creature is maintained is the only order through which life can be restored.

## **The Position of a Wife**

The question concerning the position of a wife is an interesting one in connection with the rebellion against Gospel Order. As we know, God saw the necessity of Adam having a wife before Adam himself had even thought of such an idea.

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>18</sup> And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.

God called the woman He made a “helper.”<sup>44</sup> She was to be for Adam what Christ was for God in the work of creation—an assistant; a right hand. It was God Himself who awakened Adam’s interest in having such a helper:

<sup>19</sup> Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them.

<sup>20</sup> And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

In other words, as Adam looked into the animal world, he realized that each animal had a partner. Since the animals were similar to man in certain aspects of anatomy, Adam concluded that he should have a female partner as well. By giving Adam a task, God had awakened a specific need in him, and He also met this need.

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam,

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<sup>44</sup> The Hebrew word, *èzer*, means: helper, assistant.

and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

<sup>22</sup> Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This earth was intended to be a model of the heavenly world, and Gospel Order was to function in this model world just as it did in the larger world of the entire universe. Adam was to be the primary messenger for the human family, just as Christ was the Primary Messenger for the universe. In the union of man and wife we also find a further picture of the heavenly order—a picture of the Father and Christ.

### **Genesis 1**

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

In her relationship to her husband, the wife was to represent the relationship that Christ has to His Father. Just as man and wife have the same nature, so the Father and the Son have the same nature. And just as the woman was taken out of man, so Christ went out from God.<sup>45</sup>

The love of a husband for his wife also represents the love of the Father for Christ.<sup>46</sup>

### **Genesis 2**

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Christ was God's assistant in the entire work of creation:

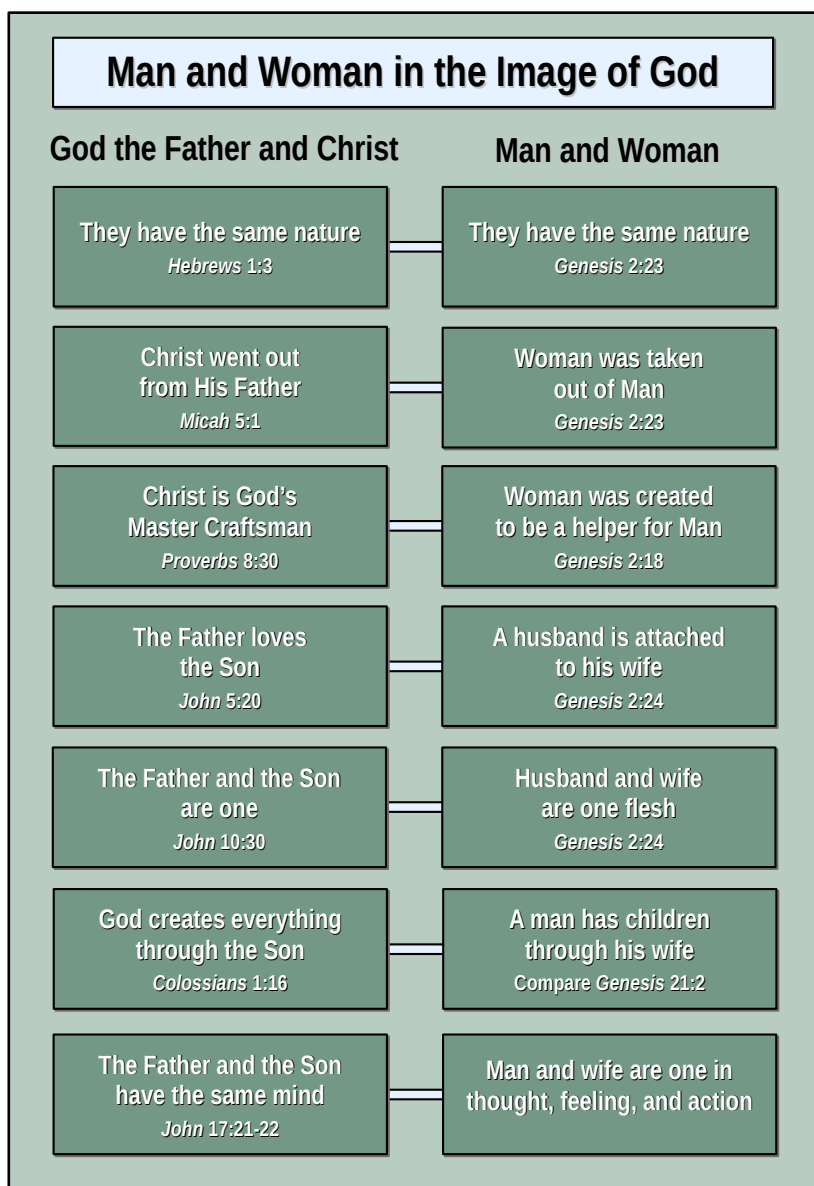
### **Proverbs 8**

<sup>30</sup> Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman.

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<sup>45</sup> See *John* 8:42; 16:27-30.

<sup>46</sup> See *Psalms* 91:14; *John* 3:35; 5:20; 10:17.



In the same way, the wife was to be her husband's assistant and support him in his work. As Christ was the One through

whom God created everything,<sup>47</sup> so Adam's children were given birth by his wife.

God and Christ are the Original, the husband and the wife are the picture. In order to give a true representation, Adam and Eve had to be one in thought, feeling, and action—a requirement that they surely met in their sinless condition.

Satan hated this order because he was jealous of Christ. And when he saw the harmony that existed between husband and wife he resolved to destroy it. It is significant that Satan used Eve in order to bring about Adam's downfall. Satan knew of the infinite love that the Father had for His Son, and therefore he would have known what a great test it would be for Adam when his wife came to him as a false messenger. It was also no light test for the Father to give up His Son for the human race.

**Early Writings, p. 127:**

Said the angel, "Think you that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them.

After Adam's sin, the harmony that existed between him and his wife was destroyed, and so too was their representation of God in their relationship. What were the consequences of this for the wife's position? The word says,

**Genesis 3**

<sup>16</sup> Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

The wife was clearly made subject to her husband.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 58:**

In the creation God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with

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<sup>47</sup> See *Colossians* 1:16; *John* 1:3.

each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other.

In order to understand the subjection of the wife to her husband in the right light, we must realize that this step came from a loving God. He never intended the subjection of the wife to her husband to be slavery. God wants the wife to submit willingly, out of love for her husband, and out of trust in the Gospel Order that their heavenly Father has given.

On the other hand, the husband needs to be aware of his increased responsibility when his wife submits to him. He must lead her as a good shepherd would.

### **1 Peter 5**

<sup>2</sup> Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.

### **Ephesians 5**

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

<sup>26</sup> That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

<sup>27</sup> That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

<sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

<sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

Paul repeatedly stressed this submission of a wife to her husband, and he plainly showed why this order is necessary.

### **1 Corinthians 14**

<sup>33</sup> For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

<sup>34</sup> Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the

law also says.

The law which Paul is referring to here is found, for the most part, in *Genesis* 3:16.

### **1 Timothy 2**

<sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.

<sup>12</sup> And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

<sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

<sup>14</sup> And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

In this scripture Paul refers to both the creation and the fall as the reason for the wife's subjection. By doing so, he clearly shows that the fall of man brought no change to Gospel Order.

Although Satan had tried to destroy the image of God by bringing disunity between the husband and wife, and although God had to place the wife in subjection to her husband, God's solution was in no way a deviation from Gospel Order. The picture now represented the Son of God in His humiliation—He who was sent to this earth in order to connect humanity with heaven again. It was a wonderful plan that God had prepared for Adam and Eve, a plan that perfectly reflected the plan of salvation.

In order to accomplish His mission on this earth, Christ had to submit fully to His Father. He...

### **Philippians 2**

<sup>6</sup> ...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God ["did not demand and cling to his rights as God", *The New Living Translation*],

<sup>7</sup> But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

## Hebrews 5

<sup>8</sup> Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

## John 5

<sup>30</sup> I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.

Since the fall of humanity, it has been the privilege of the wife to represent, in her relationship to her husband, the submission of Christ to His Father. By receiving the divine nature in rebirth, both the husband and the wife become one. But although the wife has the same nature as her husband, she does not consider it robbery (something that she has to demand and cling on to) to be equal with him. She is voluntarily obedient to him because she trusts Gospel Order.

In Christ, she is one with him in thought, feeling, and action. She will never act independently of, or in rebellion against, her husband. And she learns obedience in the sufferings that were prophesied would come to her (see *Genesis* 3:16), just as the Son of God did. This demonstration of Gospel Order could not be given in clearer terms.<sup>48</sup>

The position of a wife after the fall merely confirms what God had appointed right from the beginning. And as the wife takes up her position in this relationship she frustrates Satan's purposes.

## Conclusion

After Adam and Eve had joined Satan in his rebellion against Gospel Order, it seemed as if God's purpose in the creation of the earth had been thwarted. The picture had been ruined, and this earth had become the enemy's territory.

But the Lord had planned a way of salvation within the

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<sup>48</sup> God did not intend her to suffer at the hands of her husband, to be oppressed or dominated. This is not according to Gospel Order.

## Gospel Order After the Fall

### God the Father and Christ

### Man and Woman

They have the same nature  
*Hebrews 1:3*

Being born again, they both  
have the same nature  
*2 Peter 1:4*

Christ fully submitted  
to His Father  
*John 5:19*

The wife submits  
to her husband  
*Ephesians 5:22*

The Father loves the Son  
*John 5:20*

A man loves his wife and  
gives his life for her  
*Ephesians 5:28*

The Father and the Son  
are one  
*John 10:30*

Husband and wife  
are one in Christ  
*Galatians 3:28*

God creates everything  
through the Son  
*Colossians 1:16*

A man has children  
through his wife  
*Compare Genesis 21:2*

The Father and the Son  
have the same mind  
*John 17:21-22*

In Christ, they are one in  
thought, feeling, and action

framework of Gospel Order, and the earth became an even more glorious picture of heaven. Furthermore, in God's plan Satan's rebellion against Gospel Order is not only weakened, it will also be eternally destroyed.

### Romans 5

<sup>20</sup> But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

Naturally, we have to accept salvation before we can fulfill



the necessary conditions and give this picture.

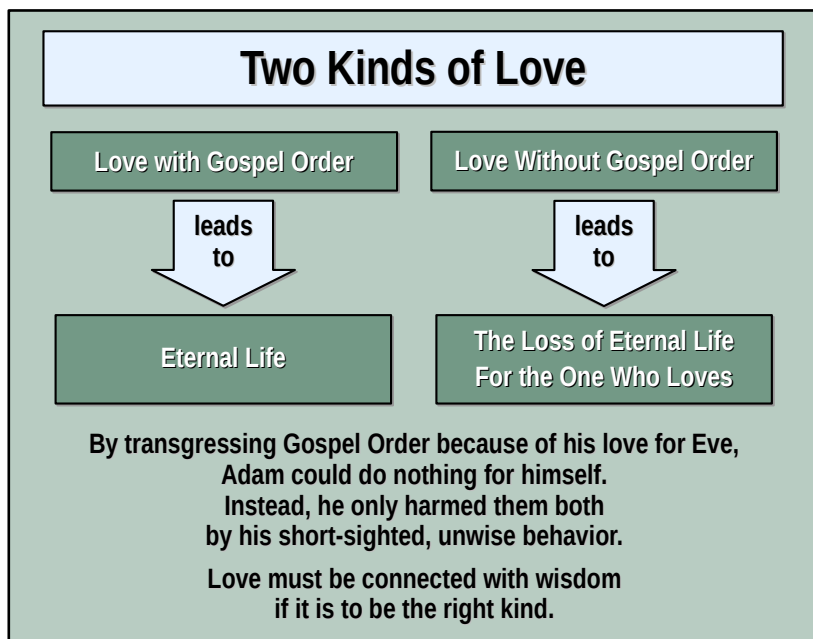
Even in the garden of Eden, where God revealed the plan of salvation to humanity, Satan had a foreboding of this mighty blessing. But he did not give up the struggle. He arrogantly claimed his place as the prince of this world, and ever since then he has put all his effort into trying to reverse Gospel Order.

For this purpose he uses his followers, both the fallen angels and those who reject the offer of salvation, just as he did with Adam and Eve in Eden. His tactics have not changed.



## 11. The Patriarchal Order

**W**HEN Adam and Eve rejected Gospel Order, they actually separated humanity from life, which clearly shows that Gospel Order is the law of life.



But instead of humanity's fall revealing a flaw in Gospel Order, as Satan had hoped, it rather served to confirm it. The plan of salvation was put into effect in order to connect the human family with life again. This new step gave an even clearer revelation of heaven's only way because it was only through Christ, the Primary Messenger, that salvation could be given, just as all the messages had come through Him from the very beginning.

### **Colossians 1**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

<sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or

dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

<sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

<sup>18</sup> And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

<sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,

<sup>20</sup> And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

## **The Promised Seed**

The fact that redemption could only come through the Primary Messenger was stated in the garden of Eden:

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

These words were directed at Satan, who had used the serpent as a medium. The seed of the serpent includes any medium that Satan uses for his own purposes. Unfortunately, ever since Adam's fall, he has been able to use humanity and not just serpents.

But who is the Seed of the woman? Referring to the new covenant that was formed in the garden of Eden, and which was renewed to Abraham, Paul writes,

### **Galatians 3**

<sup>16</sup> He does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to your Seed, who is Christ.

The Son of God, heaven's only Primary Messenger, was to become the Seed of the woman. The enmity that exists between Him and Satan would then be clearly seen on this earth. The battle that raged between them would end with the bruising of the serpent's head. Although the word speaks of

only one Seed, this enmity actually exists between all the children of Christ and those of Satan. That is why Paul wrote to the believers,

**Romans 16**

<sup>20</sup> And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

At the time that Adam and Eve were given this promise they did not have any children. They only partly understood the deep meaning of God's statement, and so they naturally expected that their first child would be the promised Son. They did not foresee the thousands of years that lay ahead, and therefore they hoped that the head of the serpent would soon be bruised. But then they learned more about the way in which the promise would be fulfilled through Gospel Order.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 67:**

Adam, in his innocence, had enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but sin brought separation between God and man, and the atonement of Christ alone could span the abyss and make possible the communication of blessing or salvation from heaven to earth. Man was still cut off from direct approach to his Creator, but God would communicate with him through Christ and angels.

Thus were revealed to Adam important events in the history of mankind, from the time when the divine sentence was pronounced in Eden, to the Flood, and onward to the first advent of the Son of God.

It was also explained to our first parents how the head of the serpent would be bruised, namely through the death of the Son of God. The sacrificial system was given them as an illustration of this truth.

The death of the first lamb was a bitter experience for Adam and Eve. It was the first time that they had witnessed the death of a creature, and furthermore, it was their own hand that had to kill the lamb. In this way they were given a practical illustration of the fact that it was their own sin which

would kill their Offspring—the Son of God. But in this almost incomprehensible sacrifice lay the hope of their salvation, which they gratefully accepted.

## **Gospel Order on Earth**

The promise of a Seed included further important truths. In this promise God declared that He wanted to establish a picture of heaven's Gospel Order on this earth, and that Satan, who would also fight against this order on earth, would finally be defeated.

In heaven, Christ was the Seed who ruled all the worlds that were then in existence by faithfully passing on the messages of His Father. Now the inhabitants of this earth were also to be given a Seed in whom this divine system would be repeated. In this way an illustration would be given not only of the relationship between God and His Son, but also of the relationship between the Son, as the Primary Messenger, and the angels. Christ was to the angels what an earthly father is to his children. They had all been created through Him, just as all humanity came from Adam.

In order to give an accurate picture of the heavenly original, the relationship of a child to its parents must be characterized by voluntary submission.

### **Exodus 20**

<sup>12</sup> Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

### **Ephesians 6**

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

<sup>2</sup> Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise:

<sup>3</sup> That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.

### **Colossians 3**

<sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well

pleasing to the Lord.

Voluntary submission lies at the heart of Gospel Order in heaven, as well as on earth. It must be emphasized that we are dealing here with a heartfelt, joyful submission, not a forced subordination of the weaker to the stronger.

### **Ephesians 6**

<sup>4</sup> And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

### **Colossians 3**

<sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

When a child is born, it does not know God, or His law. The parents represent God to the infant.<sup>49</sup> And as the child learns to obey its parents, so it will later submit to God and His instruments. This makes submission to parental authority the first and most important lesson of Gospel Order.

This family order, in which the father is the ruler of the household, is also known as patriarchal.<sup>50</sup> It began when God determined the relative positions of husband and wife, and the first child was born. It is an order that will be valid throughout eternity. We find a fitting description of this order in Abraham's family. The Lord said of Abraham,

### **Genesis 18**

<sup>19</sup> For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

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<sup>49</sup> See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

<sup>50</sup> *Patriarch* is a term found in the New Testament. For example, the twelve sons of Jacob (*Acts* 7:8-9), Abraham (*Hebrews* 7:4), and David (*Acts* 2:29) are referred to as patriarchs. The meaning of the word, which comes from the Greek (*patriarches*), is "root of a family," or "ancestral lord." The word itself comes from *patria*, meaning "family, kindred, lineage", and *arche*, meaning "beginning, rule, order."

The patriarchal system is the application of Gospel Order to this earth. And, as we have seen, voluntary submission is the main principle of this system.

The patriarch, who was the head of the family, was in the same position on earth as Christ was in heaven—the primary messenger through whom God planned to teach his posterity. All of the patriarch’s children were to be instructed in the basic truths and led into a personal relationship with Christ. The father was responsible for the family’s spiritual welfare, general questions about the development of the truth, and other questions that affected the whole family.

As the patriarch carried out this role God would always work through him as His channel. But as regards the personal application of the truth, each of his children was to pray directly to Christ, and also receive individual instruction from the angels.

The patriarch would continue to fulfill this task until he died, and after his demise the eldest son was to take up his position. In this way the knowledge of God would be maintained on earth, and even increase.

In their relationship to Christ, the patriarchs were secondary messengers, just as the angels are, because no one else can take the place of the only Primary Messenger, the Son of God. But in their relationship to the souls for whom they bore responsibility, and in regard to general orders and knowledge, the patriarchs were primary messengers who faithfully transmitted what they had received from Christ.

God made the patriarchal system a test in order to bring to light what is in the heart of each person. If the principle of submission rules the thinking, feeling, and actions, then that person accepts the divine order. If not, then he or she will follow the same path that Lucifer trod.

This test was necessary because anyone could claim that



they would not have fallen if they had received messages directly from Christ, as Adam did. And since Christ in His glory is no longer visible, such a claim could never be proved or refuted. Therefore, there had to be a field test, which would show whether a person honors their father, and follows his instructions.

If they did not honor their father, they expressed the same disobedience against the visible primary messenger on this earth as Adam did towards the visible Primary Messenger in the garden of Eden. This demonstrates the validity of the principle that,

**Testimonies to Ministers, p. 97:**

If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 308:**

And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God.

But the patriarchal system is not only necessary as proof of the genuineness of our fidelity towards Gospel Order. It is also an important school to prepare us for the heavenly order. By this means we can learn to love Christ and obey Him.

**Education, p. 245:**

Happy the child...who by trust and submission and reverence toward his earthly protectors learns to trust and obey and reverence his God.

**The Adventist Home, p. 199:**

When the mother has gained the confidence of her children and taught them to love and obey her, she has given them the first lesson in the Christian life. They must love and trust and obey their Saviour as they love and trust and obey their parents.

**Prophets and Kings, p. 245:**

Happy are the parents whose lives are a true reflection of the divine, so that the promises and commands of God

awaken in the child gratitude and reverence; the parents whose tenderness and justice and long-suffering interpret to the child the love and justice and long-suffering of God, and who by teaching the child to love and trust and obey them, are teaching him to love and trust and obey his Father in heaven.

## Reasons for the Patriarchal Order

- The relationship between the Patriarch and his descendants was to be a practical lesson for the relationship between:
  - God the Father and His Son,
  - Christ and the intelligent beings.
- Patriarchal order is a test for claims of faith.
- Patriarchal order prepares humanity to inhabit heaven.

So then, Gospel Order was established on earth not merely to give a fitting illustration of the heavenly order, but also as a necessary instrument to prepare us for heaven. Without this instrument we could never be joined to the heavenly family. In our fallen condition we need a school. And this school was created through the patriarchal system.

## Enmity Between the Seeds

After they had to leave the garden of Eden, the first son, Cain, was born to Adam and Eve. Their second son was Abel. The enmity that was to exist between their descendants could be clearly seen in these two sons. Cain was certainly not the Seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head. In fact, he was the murderer of his brother, Abel! Cain was a descendant of the serpent, as Jesus Himself said,

### John 8

<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your fa-

ther you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning.

As the oldest son, Cain was supposed to be the future patriarch and messenger through whom God would teach all humanity. But he did not take up this role.

Abel's attitude, on the other hand, was exactly the opposite. He valued the patriarchal order highly, and listened to the messages that God imparted to him through his father Adam. He was faithful to the message and brought his sacrifice exactly as had been prescribed. In his heart he was grateful for Christ's ministry, and he considered the punishment that came as a result of sin as being just. This appreciation found expression in his sacrifice.

#### **Genesis 4**

<sup>3</sup> And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering.

#### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71:**

As a sign of divine approval, fire fell from heaven and consumed Abel's sacrifice.

God clearly acknowledged Abel as a true seed.

#### **Hebrews 11**

<sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

Although the patriarchal system gave the eldest son natural precedence, this privilege was closely bound to certain conditions. And it is a fact that God's order can only function correctly when we abide by His rules. That is why Adam's younger son, and not the elder, received the blessing of God's acknowledgment.

This was a plain rebuke for Cain. Like his mother before

him, Cain imagined himself wise and strong enough to interpret the word of God according to his own judgment. He thought it a sign of weakness, and even a real mistake, to submit to patriarchal order. Were not his parents responsible for all the results of transgression? How could he submit to them now?

But his arguments overlooked the fact that despite their past mistake, God had accepted their repentance and still made Adam and Eve His mouthpiece for their children. Cain rejected the treasure because of the vessel it was in, which appeared defective to him. And therefore he did not obey the explicit directions to kill an animal, but simply brought the fruits of his field. His prayer was obviously not a heartfelt consecration, and therefore stood in stark contrast to Abel's prayer.

#### **Genesis 4**

<sup>4</sup> And the Lord respected Abel and his offering,

<sup>5</sup> But He did not respect Cain and his offering.

The manifestation of God's acknowledgment on the one hand, and the lack of it on the other, contained a rebuke for Cain—a rebuke that was intended to bring him into harmony with the divine order, but which had the opposite effect.

<sup>5</sup> ...And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

He was upset that he, as the oldest son, had not received the recognition which he considered his due. Cain desired the structure of Gospel Order, but not the spirit that lies behind it. He did not see that every blessing of God is dependent on conditions. Although he did not fulfill the conditions, he still insisted on maintaining his position because he was the oldest son. But God showed Cain that in His kingdom it is a question of the spirit that drives us, and not of the position that we may fill.

<sup>6</sup> So the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? And why has

your countenance fallen?

<sup>7</sup> If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

In other words, God showed Cain that he had left the path of obedience, but that he could still return to that path. If he would rule over sin then he would indeed be able to fill his position in the patriarchal order as the oldest son. With a free and uplifted countenance, he could take the leading role of Adam and Eve's sons in the worship of God and become the patriarch of the human family after the death of his father.

Unfortunately, Cain did not listen to God's loving warning. Instead, he tried to secure his position by killing his brother. It was Satan who drove Cain to commit such an act, and in so doing he revealed what he would have done to anyone in heaven who would not recognize his claims to power—if he had been able to do so.

The Bible account of this event reveals that Cain was neither open nor honest. First of all, he lured his brother into an ambush and then carried out his plan in secret, or so he thought.

#### **Genesis 4**

<sup>8</sup> Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

This report clearly illustrates what God had foretold:

#### **Genesis 3**

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity...

It plainly reveals Satan's enmity towards the practice of Gospel Order. This enmity towards God's order runs like a thread through the history of this world, and in the last days it will reach its climax.

## In Antediluvian Times

The death of his second son was a double blow to Adam. Firstly he had to accept the loss of a faithful son, and secondly, he also lost Cain, whose disrespect for patriarchal order now took on even greater proportions.

### **Genesis 4**

<sup>16</sup> Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 81:**

Upon receiving the curse of God, Cain had withdrawn from his father's household....He had gone out from the presence of the Lord, cast away the promise of the restored Eden, to seek his possessions and enjoyment in the earth under the curse of sin, thus standing at the head of that great class of men who worship the god of this world.

When Cain left his home, he also left the primary messenger—the channel through whom he had received God's messages.

This, however, did not mean that Adam stopped being God's channel. Whoever desired to do so could listen to God's message through his mouth.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 82:**

For nearly a thousand years Adam lived among men, a witness to the results of sin. Faithfully he sought to stem the tide of evil. He had been commanded to instruct his posterity in the way of the Lord; and he carefully treasured what God had revealed to him, and repeated it to succeeding generations. To his children and children's children, to the ninth generation, he described man's holy and happy estate in Paradise, and repeated the history of his fall, telling them of the sufferings by which God had taught him the necessity of strict adherence to His law, and explaining to them the merciful provisions for their salvation.

Unfortunately, not all of Adam's hearers were a willing audience.

Yet there were but few who gave heed to his words. Often he was met with bitter reproaches for the sin that had brought such woe upon his posterity.

But despite all this, the channel of communication between the Lord and the inhabitants of the earth remained open.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 83:**

All the world had opportunity to receive instruction from Adam.

And it is obvious that the messages that came through God's messenger were not without effect.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 84:**

And the existence and supreme authority of God, the obligation of His law, were truths which men were slow to question while Adam was among them.

There were also many secondary messengers who faithfully carried out their work.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 83:**

The antediluvians were without books, they had no written records; but with their great physical and mental vigor, they had strong memories, able to grasp and to retain that which was communicated to them, and in turn to transmit it unimpaired to their posterity.

Soon two classes of human beings developed. The descendants of Cain rejected Gospel Order, while Seth and his descendants continued in the path of patriarchal order. A list of the antediluvian patriarchs is recorded in *Genesis* 5. These were, in chronological order: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah.

Enoch was Jared's oldest son, and he was translated to heaven<sup>51</sup> long before the death of his father, and even before

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<sup>51</sup> See *Genesis* 5:22-24 and *Hebrews* 11:5: "By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and was not found, because God had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

the death of his grandfather Mahalalel, his great-great-grandfather Enosh, and his great-great-great-grandfather Seth. In other words, he never actually came to be a patriarch on this earth. But he knew Adam, and he heard the message of salvation from him.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 84:**

From the lips of Adam he had learned the dark story of the Fall, and the cheering one of God's grace as seen in the promise.

Enoch had a very special task, independent of the role of a patriarch. He was chosen by God to reveal future events to humanity. For this purpose he was given the prophetic gift, as it is written.

**Jude 1**

<sup>14</sup> Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,

<sup>15</sup> To execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

Enoch preached everything that God revealed to him to the descendants of Seth, as well as to the descendants of Cain.

Unlike the historical office of patriarch, the gift of prophecy has seldom been limited to just one person on this earth. For example, Paul writes,

**1 Corinthians 14**

<sup>5</sup> I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied.

Therefore, it is quite possible that apart from the primary messenger, the Lord calls prophets through whom He reveals Himself to His people, and who support the primary messenger in his work. In fact, the church needs to actively pray for this gift.



Enoch was translated when he was three hundred years old. In heaven he continued his ministry on behalf of humanity and later he appeared from time to time on this earth. Approximately one thousand years after his translation he appeared as Melchizedek, King of Salem, and received tithes from Abraham. *Genesis* 14:18-20. Therefore, Enoch actually did serve as a patriarch, although he did so at the level of an angel.

Lamech was Methuselah's oldest son but he never carried out the task of patriarch because he died before his father. But his son, Noah, also had a very special role. He was given the particular task of warning the world of the coming flood.

### **Hebrews 11**

<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 92:**

A hundred and twenty years before the Flood, the Lord by a holy angel declared to Noah His purpose, and directed him to build an ark. While building the ark he was to preach that God would bring a flood of water upon the earth to destroy the wicked. Those who would believe the message, and would prepare for that event by repentance and reformation, should find pardon and be saved. Enoch had repeated to his children what God had shown him in regard to the Flood, and Methuselah and his sons, who lived to hear the preaching of Noah, assisted in building the ark.

One hundred and twenty years before the terrible catastrophe of the flood, the Lord called his servant Noah to warn the world.<sup>52</sup> During this time, Noah's grandfather who was still alive, was still the primary messenger, according to patriarch-

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<sup>52</sup> "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." *Genesis* 6:3. "For a hundred and twenty years was sounded in their ears the warning to repent..." *The Great Controversy*, p. 337.

chal order.

Why was it that he and his sons listened to Noah's message, instead of Noah listening to them? Obviously, there were not many believers at that time. And many of the faithful died before the flood, so that only Noah and his family remained to enter the ark. These eight had to suffer the mockery of the world, but they went into the ark by faith in the word of God. Among the believers who died before the flood were Methuselah, and at least some of his sons, including Noah's father, Lamech.

Therefore, Noah's preaching was directed primarily towards the world. He was a missionary, and the message that he preached was the same that Adam and Enoch had passed on to their descendants.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, Noah was a secondary messenger to whom God had given a special task for his time—to build the ark and warn the world of the flood to come.

The Lord gives such responsibilities not only to the primary messenger, but also to other members of His body. But even though Noah was called to this particular responsibility, he still received the foundation of the plan of salvation from his grandfather, Methuselah. Furthermore, he also submitted to Methuselah as the head and priest of the family.

After the flood, Noah was the patriarch of all humanity. But the Scriptures reveal that the transgression of the patriarchal system soon began again with his children. Canaan, the son of Ham, manifested the weakness of his father, and therefore he was rebuked by God through Noah.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 117:**

Noah, speaking by divine inspiration, foretold the history of the three great races to spring from these fathers of mankind. Tracing the descendants of Ham, through the son rather than the father, he declared, "Cursed be Canaan; a

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<sup>53</sup> Adam was the first to whom it was revealed that a flood would come. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” The unnatural crime of Ham declared that filial reverence had long before been cast from his soul, and it revealed the impiety and vileness of his character. These evil characteristics were perpetuated in Canaan and his posterity, whose continued guilt called upon them the judgments of God.

On the other hand, the reverence manifested by Shem and Japheth for their father, and thus for the divine statutes, promised a brighter future for their descendants.

Of Noah’s three sons, Japheth was the eldest.<sup>54</sup> But his children were soon involved in such an apostasy that the patriarchal system could no longer function among them.

Noah, the faithful messenger, lived for a further three hundred years after the flood. Shem, his middle son, lived for a further five hundred years. But even Shem’s descendants were soon unwilling to continue listening to the patriarch. The confusion of the languages and the geographical displacement also had their effect, so that finally nobody listened to the truth from these two messengers, Noah and Shem.

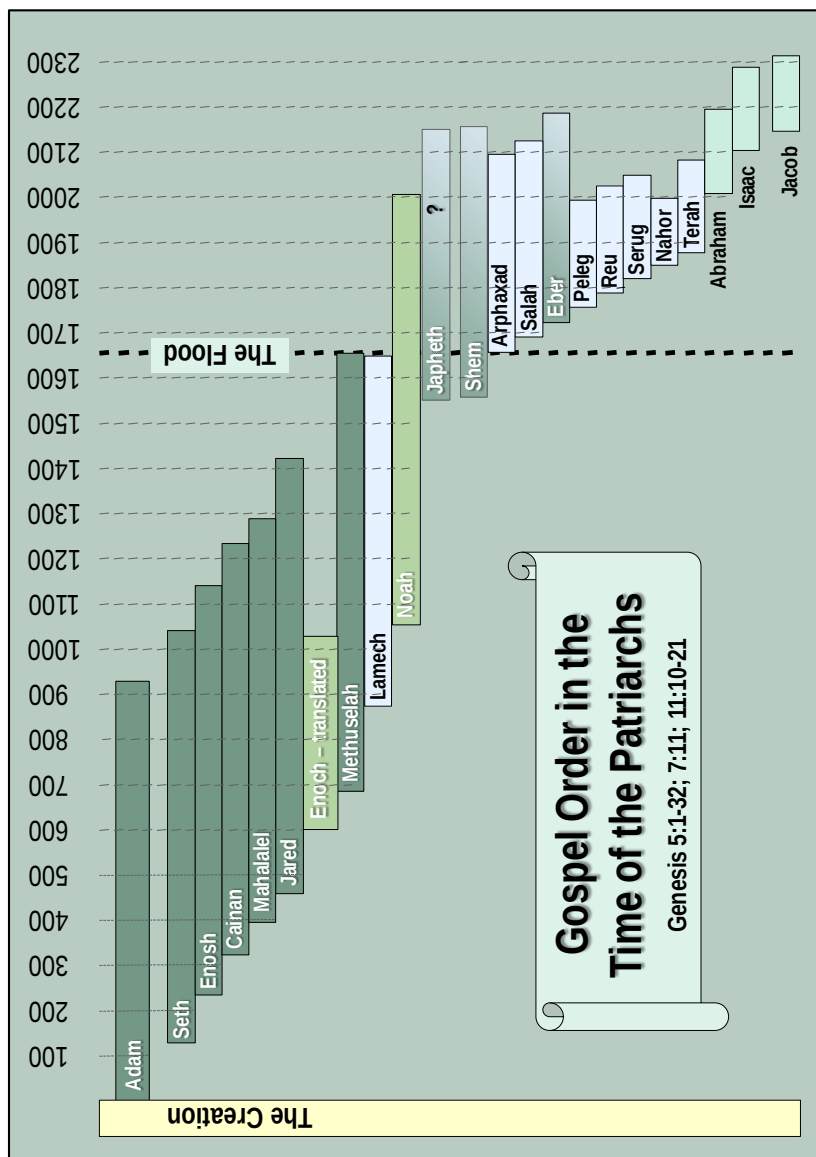
In order to retain the knowledge of God among the people, the Lord called a new patriarch from the peoples who populated the plain of Shinar. He chose a descendant of Shem, Abraham, who lived in Ur of the Chaldees.

## **In the Time of Abraham**

In order to serve as a patriarch, Abraham first had to be separated from the unbelieving society in which he lived.

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<sup>54</sup> It is apparent from *Genesis* 9:24 that Ham was Noah's youngest son. According to *Genesis* 5:23 Noah had his first child when he was five hundred years old. Shem was one hundred years old two years after the flood (see *Genesis* 11:10). At that time Noah was six hundred and two (see *Genesis* 7:11). In other words, Noah was five hundred and two years old when Shem was born. From this we deduce that Japheth was born when Noah was five hundred years old. It is not reported when Ham, the youngest son, was born.



### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 125:**

Abraham had grown up in the midst of superstition and heathenism. Even his father's household, by whom the knowledge of God had been preserved, were yielding to the seductive influences surrounding them, and they "served other gods" than Jehovah. But the true faith was not to become extinct. God has ever preserved a remnant to serve Him. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, in unbroken line, had preserved from age to age the precious revelations of His will. The son of Terah became the inheritor of this holy trust. Idolatry invited him on every side, but in vain. Faithful among the faithless, uncorrupted by the prevailing apostasy, he steadfastly adhered to the worship of the one true God.

#### **Psalms 145**

<sup>18</sup> The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.

This separation from Abraham's unbelieving environment was initiated by a clear call from God.

#### **Acts 7**

<sup>2</sup> The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,

<sup>3</sup> And said to him, Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.

#### **Genesis 15**

<sup>7</sup> Then He said to him, I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.

#### **Nehemiah 9**

<sup>7</sup> You are the Lord God, who chose Abram, and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and gave him the name Abraham.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 126:**

The message of God came to Abraham, "Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you." In order that God might qualify him for his great work as the keeper of the sa-

cred oracles, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world.

Although Abraham received the call to leave his home in Ur directly from God, he let his father lead out in this matter.

### **Genesis 11**

<sup>31</sup> And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

In this report we can see the respect for patriarchal order that was still present, despite the extent of the prevailing apostasy. It was only after the death of his father, Terah, that Abraham was given a second call. This time, he led the way for the rest of the journey.

### **Genesis 11**

<sup>32</sup> So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

### **Genesis 12**

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

<sup>2</sup> I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

<sup>4</sup> So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

<sup>5</sup> Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the

people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.

Out of all their relatives, only Sarai and Lot decided to follow God's call and go with Abraham. Following this call was an act of faith, because no one knew where they were going, nor how they would be provided for.

### **Hebrews 11**

<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

But Lot manifested a serious lack in his faith, and therefore Abraham had to separate from him as well. This was necessary in order to be a patriarch according to God's purpose.

The inhabitants of Canaan were in no way better than the people in Ur or Haran. Quite the opposite in fact, for the Canaanites seemed to be involved in even deeper apostasy. But the decisive difference was that Abraham was a foreigner here, and not part of a large family. This was an important requirement for the patriarchal order that was now to be given a new direction.

### **Hebrews 11**

<sup>9</sup> By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

<sup>10</sup> For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

## **The Principles of Patriarchal Order**

As the word says, the patriarchal order could now function according to the original pattern of Gospel Order.

### **Genesis 18**

<sup>19</sup> For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord

may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

At no other time was patriarchal order more clearly manifested than during the time of the patriarch Abraham.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:**

In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God.

It was necessary to bind the members of the household together, in order to build up a barrier against the idolatry that had become so widespread and so deep-seated. Abraham sought by every means in his power to guard the inmates of his encampment against mingling with the heathen and witnessing their idolatrous practices, for he knew that familiarity with evil would insensibly corrupt the principles. The greatest care was exercised to shut out every form of false religion and to impress the mind with the majesty and glory of the living God as the true object of worship.

Although, in the patriarchal system, the mother was subject to the father, who was the head of the family, she still had a leading position in the family. The word says,

**Exodus 20**

<sup>12</sup> Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

And Peter describes the role of the mother in the following words,

**1 Peter 3**

<sup>5</sup> For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

<sup>6</sup> As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any ter-



ror.

The wife was to be the helper of her husband and stand by his side in leading the family in voluntary submission and obedience to God. Her spirit had a great influence on her husband as well as the entire household. That is why the choice of a wife for the son was a very important one.

According to patriarchal order, the father still exercised authority over his children even when they had families of their own. This principle sounds almost foreign to our ears today, because it is no longer customary to act this way. And if it were applied in a sinful environment it would also lead to tremendous conflict between the different generations. But even so, we should not forget that God Himself established this order, and that is why it works.

The principle of patriarchal order also has a special application to the choice of a partner. This is an area in which young people of today are very reluctant to listen to anybody else. Firstly, it is the most important decision of their life, and secondly, it involves their feelings. They want to be their own masters in this matter, otherwise they think they could never be happy.

But that is not how it was in the days of the patriarchs. The best example of this is Isaac, the promised son. He submitted to the Gospel Order of his home so completely that he left it to his father to determine his time of marriage and to choose a partner for him. He knew that God would lead his father in the matter of looking for a bride, even though he was already forty years old himself.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to this is the example of Isaac's son Esau, who showed his lack of respect for the patriarchal system in this very point, by not asking his parents.

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<sup>55</sup> See *Genesis* 24.

## Genesis 26

<sup>34</sup> When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

<sup>35</sup> And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

This fundamental rule concerning the choice of partner is still valid today, as can be seen in Ellen White's instructions to her children. She wrote to her son,

### **Manuscript Releases, vol. 5, p. 385:**

Edson,...it has been told me that you were seen riding with the Walters girl. I do not charge this upon you as a grievous sin, but you are well aware that we would not approve of your showing partiality or attention to any young miss at your age. When you are old enough to begin to manifest preference for any particular one we are the ones to be consulted and to choose for you....Will you please to remember it, and rely upon your parents' advice and instruction?

But, as we learn from Abraham's example, this kind of authority can only be exercised over the children when the parents have other godly principles in their hearts as well. The father was not authorized to rule arbitrarily, but was himself only a channel who was also subject to God's will. It was not the will of the patriarch that was decisive, but the will of God, which was clearly defined in His law.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142:**

All were taught that they were under the rule of the God of heaven. There was to be no oppression on the part of parents and no disobedience on the part of children. God's law had appointed to each his duties, and only in obedience to it could any secure happiness or prosperity.

The consequences of this principle is that the same rights apply to all—to the patriarch just as much as to his wife, children, and even the servants of the house.

He [Abraham] did not neglect the soul of the humblest servant. In his household there was not one law for the mas-

ter and another for the servant; a royal way for the rich and another for the poor. All were treated with justice and compassion, as inheritors with him of the grace of life.

Just imagine what would have happened if Abraham had allowed his children to tell lies, but severely punished his servants for committing the same crime! That would certainly have undermined his patriarchal authority.

“He will command his...household.” There would be no sinful neglect to restrain the evil propensities of his children, no weak, unwise, indulgent favoritism; no yielding of his conviction of duty to the claims of mistaken affection. Abraham would not only give right instruction, but he would maintain the authority of just and righteous laws.

How few there are in our day who follow this example! On the part of too many parents there is a blind and selfish sentimentalism, miscalled love, which is manifested in leaving children, with their unformed judgment and undisciplined passions, to the control of their own will. This is the veriest cruelty to the youth and a great wrong to the world.

Parental indulgence causes disorder in families and in society. It confirms in the young the desire to follow inclination, instead of submitting to the divine requirements. Thus they grow up with a heart averse to doing God’s will, and they transmit their irreligious, insubordinate spirit to their children and children’s children.

Like Abraham, parents should command their households after them. Let obedience to parental authority be taught and enforced as the first step in obedience to the authority of God.

The fact that the divine law of God is the impartial foundation of the patriarchal family is reinforced by the atmosphere of politeness and mutual respect that it engenders.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 142:**

His own example, the silent influence of his daily life, was a constant lesson. The unswerving integrity, the benevolence and unselfish courtesy, which had won the admiration of

kings, were displayed in the home. There was a fragrance about the life, a nobility and loveliness of character, which revealed to all that he was connected with Heaven. He did not neglect the soul of the humblest servant.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 143:**

They [the parents] should patiently instruct their children, kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God. The children of such a household are prepared to meet the sophistries of infidelity. They have accepted the Bible as the basis of their faith, and they have a foundation that cannot be swept away by the incoming tide of skepticism.

### Principles of the Patriarchal Order

1. Separation of the patriarchal family from heathen surroundings.
2. The father is the ruler and priest of the family. His instruction was applicable to:
  - a. Common daily affairs;
  - b. Matters of faith.
3. The father makes important decisions for his children (for example, in the question of the choice of a partner).
4. The father exercises authority over his children, even after they have families of their own.
5. The father has only one wife.
6. All the members of the family (the household) are under the rule of God and His law.
7. Everyone has the same rights (the rights of God's law).
8. The atmosphere of the home is imbued with politeness and mutual respect.
9. The family altar is the center of family life.

### The Family Altar

There is only one way in which the order described here

can be maintained. Prayer, which connects the members of the family with God, is the most important element of the patriarchal system. It is only when the family altar is the center of family life that this order can be maintained. That is how it was with Abraham. Whenever he arrived at a new site he would erect an altar and call his entire household to gather together for the morning and evening sacrifice.

### **Genesis 12**

<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, To your descendants I will give this land. And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

<sup>8</sup> And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

### **Genesis 13**

<sup>18</sup> Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 128:**

Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside it was set up his altar, calling all within his encampment to the morning and evening sacrifice. When his tent was removed, the altar remained.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 143-144:**

In too many households prayer is neglected. Parents feel that they have no time for morning and evening worship. They cannot spare a few moments to be spent in thanksgiving to God for His abundant mercies—for the blessed sunshine and the showers of rain, which cause vegetation to flourish, and for the guardianship of holy angels. They have no time to offer prayer for divine help and guidance and for the abiding presence of Jesus in the household. They go forth to labor as the ox or the horse goes, without one thought of God or heaven. They have souls so precious that rather than permit them to be hopelessly lost, the Son of God gave His

life to ransom them; but they have little more appreciation of His great goodness than have the beasts that perish.

Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent. If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry.

From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where this principle is carried out—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns. From these homes morning and evening prayer ascends to God as sweet incense, and His mercies and blessings descend upon the suplicants like the morning dew.

## **Abraham's Descendants**

Abraham's oldest son was Ishmael. And in his example we see another principle of patriarchal order. Ishmael was not the son of the one legitimate wife of Abraham. By taking Hagar to be his wife as well, Abraham transgressed the principle that a patriarch, and indeed, any other man, may have only one wife. A true picture of heavenly order can only be given in this way because nobody can share Christ's position.

It is true that Abraham did not have any evil intentions when he acted the way he did, and it was quite common at that time for a man to take a second wife, especially if his wife was barren, but it was nevertheless wrong. The example of Hagar demonstrates that every deviation from Gospel Order brings disaster.

### **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 147:**

The instruction given to Abraham touching the sacredness of the marriage relation was to be a lesson for all ages. It de-

clares that the rights and happiness of this relation are to be carefully guarded, even at a great sacrifice. Sarah was the only true wife of Abraham. Her rights as a wife and mother no other person was entitled to share. She revered her husband, and in this she is presented in the New Testament as a worthy example.

But she was unwilling that Abraham's affections should be given to another, and the Lord did not reprove her for requiring the banishment of her rival. Both Abraham and Sarah distrusted the power of God, and it was this error that led to the marriage with Hagar.

This wrong step also led to bad results for Hagar's child. Ishmael did not follow the path of patriarchal order.

### **Genesis 21**

<sup>9</sup> And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.

For this reason he had to be separated from the patriarchal family. By His judgment, God confirmed what Sarah had demanded.

<sup>10</sup> Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.

### **Galatians 4**

<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless what says the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

It was according to the will of God that Isaac, who was destined to continue the patriarchal lineage, should be separated from Ishmael in this way.

Isaac's spirit of submission was especially manifest when Abraham received the command from God to sacrifice his son. At first, Isaac knew nothing of what was to take place, but when he did learn of God's plan he accepted the message with all his heart, even though it appeared to mean his imminent

death. It was the message of God through his father, and he submitted to it willingly.

**Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 152:**

But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission. He was a sharer in Abraham's faith, and he felt that he was honored in being called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten the father's grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar.

This example of the acceptance of Gospel Order is like a brightly shining light that reveals the beauty of true submission. In contrast to this, Isaac's own eldest son, Esau, did not live in harmony with Gospel Order:

**Genesis 25**

<sup>29</sup> Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary.

<sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob, Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary. Therefore his name was called Edom.

<sup>31</sup> But Jacob said, Sell me your birthright as of this day.

<sup>32</sup> And Esau said, Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?

<sup>33</sup> Then Jacob said, Swear to me as of this day. So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

<sup>34</sup> And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Esau despised the office of a patriarch, just as he despised the office of Christ, and therefore it was Jacob who continued the patriarchal lineage. But Jacob also made the mistake of taking more than one wife, and this made it impossible for patriarchal order to function any longer. His twelve sons were greatly deficient in character due to the continual strife of the mothers at home, and the family drifted far away from Gospel Order.



When Jacob described the characters of his twelve sons, shortly before he died, he clearly withdrew Reuben's right, as the eldest son, to be the leading patriarch of the family. Instead of this, the twelve tribes of Israel descended from Jacob's sons, thus maintaining, to a certain extent, the patriarchal form.

## **Conclusion**

The Lord originally intended that the entire human family would be established according to the principles of patriarchal order. But sin gained such an influence that this was not possible.

Therefore, after the flood God called His servant Abraham, from the lineage of Shem, to continue this order. Through his example the church of God in this world was to be a model family. But God's purpose was again thwarted because Abraham's descendants did not follow God's ways.

However, this does not mean that patriarchal order has been abolished. Its spiritual principles are still applicable to the church of God today. Even now, these principles still reveal the everlasting order of God's kingdom, and are preparing His people for heaven.

### **The Desire of Ages, p. 680:**

Christ designs that heaven's order, heaven's plan of government, heaven's divine harmony, shall be represented in His church on earth. Thus in His people He is glorified.





