

# I Think as a Man



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## **Cover Picture**

Man is ever seeking to probe the secrets of his world and beyond. He considers himself accomplished and enlightened. With the light that he has, he believes he has the ability to correctly evaluate those things he has discovered and those into which he searches. From his standpoint he believes he is viewing all things correctly and is satisfied to continue thinking as a man.

But the instruments through which he attempts to fathom all things are feeble, and his enlightenment less than he realizes. These limitations have not only affected his understanding and evaluation of his material world, but they have also led him to incorrect conclusions about the character of his Creator.

To be saved from his false views of God, man needs to cease thinking as a man, and begin thinking as God thinks. When God's light becomes the basis for man's evaluation, he will then see God as he really is.

# Introduction

THE purpose of this article is to set in motion a train of thought designed to overthrow the unfortunate misconceptions about the character of God which have palsied the spiritual outreach of men since the emergence of sin.

It lays down some principles which are very basic to a grasp of this subject but it does not specifically answer the many questions which will be raised.

A much larger work entitled *Behold Your God* gives a comprehensive coverage of this vast and saving subject. It answers the many questions left untouched in this publication.

The study of the character of God as revealed in the life and teachings of Christ and, in fact, through the whole of the Scriptures, is a study of the highest possible value. Rightly understood, it is the key to eternal life.

May every reader of these pages, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, be delivered from the thoughts of wayward man to think and to speak the words of God.



# 1. To Think as a Man

FOR days the rain poured down in steady torrents. The old earth dam was thirty-five years old. The water, brown and swirling, reached almost to its crest. Still the rain continued.

In the river valley below, the residents went about their business, wishing the rain would end but paying little attention beyond that.

Then it happened.

The earth walls trembled beneath the mounting pressure of manifold tons of water, cracked, then exploded outwards, releasing a surging thirty-foot wall of roaring, foaming, savage destruction which raced at express train speed upon all that stood in its path.

When its brief fury was spent, thirty-nine people were dead and forty-five seriously injured. Buildings and vehicles were savaged into worthless junk. Naturally, the insurance companies described the tragedy as an “act of God.”

*Of course, they thought as men.*

Above the steaming jungles of a south-sea island, a great volcano raised its mighty crown. Of late, it had rumbled and smoked, causing the villagers to regard it with increasing apprehension.

Then came the day when mighty explosions rent the air. Boiling lava flowed over the side and advanced inexorably on the villages below. Houses were consumed in the flames, crops were wiped out, and



stock losses were heavy. The villagers themselves fled for their lives, finally taking to the steaming sea in canoes.

With sober and awed faces they told one another that God was angry with them and they must work out some method of appeasing Him.

*This is to think as a man.*

A person who had always enjoyed wonderful health, became seriously ill. Confined to a bed of suffering and pain in the hospital, his thoughts turned to God for comfort. He took up a bedside Bible and, opening it for the first time in his life, began to read at the beginning.

Passing beyond the *Genesis* record of creation and the fall of Adam, he came to the story of the flood where he read that God sent the waters on the earth to destroy those who would not obey Him. Then he read of the outpouring of fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues rained upon Egypt, and the commands from God to the Israelites to go out and destroy the Amalekites down to the tender infant in arms.

It was too much. He closed the book declaring that he could neither love nor serve a God who could manifest such cruelty as he saw pictured in those words. How sad indeed that he read it all through the eyes of human understanding. He saw God behaving as if He were a man.

Ever more frequently, disasters are destroying life and property around the world. Always it is regarded as being the work of a God who is venting His wrath on a people who will not obey, respect, and love Him.

*This is to attribute human behavior to God.*

This is not to speak as God speaks nor to think as He thinks. No one will ever love and serve God while he thinks of Him in the limited, superficial way of man. The very facts of life prove this.

Humans are so settled in the idea that an angry God is sending all these troubles on the earth that they do not question the notion. They believe that He does this to correct their disobedience, but it does not produce such a result. The more they are subjected to such treatment, the less they love God and the more rebelliously they pursue their own ways.

This is the natural outcome. Look and see if any earthly potentate ever won the love and loyalty of his subjects by inflicting upon them heavy punishments for disobedience. He may have obtained a craven service, but this is not the loyalty of love.

Therefore, if God uses the tactics which men believe He does, then it is a self-defeating program. Instead of gaining loving and cheerful obedience, He is rewarded at best with a servile loyalty and, at worst, with open and flagrant rebellion.



## 2. Another Way to Think

**T**HERE is another altogether different, inspiringly beautiful, and refreshingly pleasant way to think of God. It is the way of Christ. The time surely has come when men need to speak of God, not as a man, but as Christ did. When men learn to speak of God as Christ did, then love, joy, admiration, loyalty, and peace will spring forth naturally from the human heart. Then, God will truly be seen as a loving Father, not as a despotic monarch.

When Christ came to this earth, He had a number of missions to accomplish. One of the most important of these was to expose the lie in circulation regarding His Father's wonderful character and to show the Father as He truly is. He invites all to see, to think and to speak of God as He sees, thinks and speaks of Him, not as men do.

Christ revealed the Father so fully that all that men can know or need to know about Him has been revealed in the life and character of His Son. Yet despite the magnificent level of perfection to which Christ did this work, this aspect of His divine ministry remains little known and recognized even to this day. Not even the apostles of Christ awakened to it. It is for this reason that Philip said:

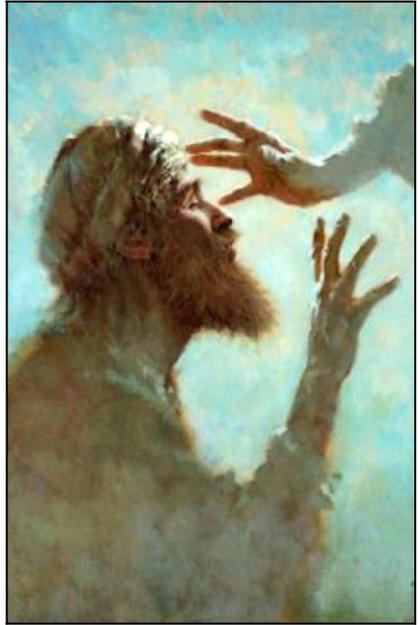
### **John 14**

<sup>8</sup> Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us.

Christ was greatly disappointed by this request. Well He might be, for it told Him that the purpose of His mission remained undiscerned by the ones nearest to Him—the ones who should have seen this the first and the most.

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how do you say then, Show us the Father?

Christ affirmed that if they had seen Him and His wonderful character of love, then they had seen the Father. This is to assert, quite truthfully, that Christ had not merely come to declare the Father. He had also come to reveal or to manifest Him. To do the latter or even the former effectively, He must in himself be a perfect and complete reproduction of the Father. This He indeed was.



Quite some time before this conversation with Philip took place, He had already informed them that His life was the perfect reflection of the Father's and that He did only what the Father did.

### **John 5**

<sup>19</sup> Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He does, these also does the Son likewise.

<sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that himself does: and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

The essential point in this declaration from Him who said of himself,

### **John 14**

<sup>6</sup> I am...the truth,

-is that not only did Christ do only the things which the Father did, but He did them likewise, or exactly as the Father did them.

The methods, the principles of operation, the procedures of the One, are precisely and completely those of the Other.

Many have read the records of the Old Testament and have seen God as a wrathful, vengeful being who thought nothing of pouring molten fire down on the helpless heads of those who would not repent, the Sodomites being a case in point.

Then they have read the story of Christ and, seeing a being very different from the God they saw in the Old Testament, have concluded that the characters of God and Christ are different. They see Christ as being gentle, loving, kind, forgiving, humble, and patient and as One who never once retaliated against His enemies.

Irrespective of how brutally they treated Him, how unkindly they rejected Him, how mercilessly they harassed Him, and how shamelessly they lied about Him, He only responded by doing good to them in return. Though invited to destroy His rejecters, He never once lifted a finger to do so.

To say that the Father and the Son have different characters is to speak as a man for this is not the way Christ spoke. With absolute finality and authority, He confirmed that He and His Father were of the same character and did the same works in the same way.

### 3. Another View

**T**HOSE who see as Christ saw and speak as He speaks, know and speak the truth. They no longer think as men. They discard all the views once held which conflict with the testimony of Jesus.



It means that what they thought they saw God doing in the Old Testament, must be exchanged for another and different view, the new one coinciding with the revelation of God as given by His Son during His earthly ministry.

In reality, it is to say that the life and teachings of Christ are the measure by which every notion about God must be tested. Any

view of God the Father, no matter how logical or long-standing it may be, which in any way differs from the ways of Christ, is to be discarded as error.

This must be done even though at first it is impossible to see where it actually is in error. Those who do this will assuredly have correct views of the character and ways of God. This will, in turn, bring blessing and benefit beyond estimate.

In this brief paper it is impossible to explore every erroneous idea about the character of God which has been drawn from the Old Testament, but space will be devoted to one such experience.

For centuries, Israel had been in Egyptian captivity when God, from the burning bush, at last called Moses to go and lead the people to the promised land. Very explicit were the instructions given to the leader:

### **Exodus 7**

<sup>1</sup> And the Lord said unto Moses, See I have made you a God to Pharaoh: and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

<sup>2</sup> You shall speak all that I command you: and Aaron your brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

<sup>3</sup> And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

<sup>4</sup> But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

<sup>5</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

The story continues with Moses and Aaron going in before the king, demanding the release of the Israelites, Pharaoh's flat refusal followed by devastating plague after plague, until, battered and beaten, the king was glad to let them go. It is a familiar history.

Men have come to their own conclusions about how God performed in this drama. This is how men, who think like men, have seen it:

God was the all-powerful ruler of the universe. The time came when He decided that the Israelites should be released. Accordingly, in a tone of authority, He ordered Moses to command the king to free them with the threat of direct reprisals should he refuse.

The monarch did refuse, whereupon God struck him hard by turning the Nile and the waters throughout the land into undrinkable blood. Then God paused, to give the defiant ruler time to acquiesce. When he refused to obey, the Lord struck him again. With each repeated and rebellious refusal, God struck him until in the end he was literally battered into submission and had no choice but to release them.

This is the way in which men generally understand God to have conducted His affairs in that situation.



## 4. The Crucial Question

COMPARE this view of God with another picture. In certain cities of the world, such as Chicago, USA, there are powerful criminal organizations which look upon themselves as being the true governors of the metropolis. They decide that they want specific “payments” from a given businessman. Accordingly, they go to him and announce their demands, intimating that they are the effective power in the area, and making it clear that if he refuses to comply, they will hit him hard.



The man, either because he has principle or has not yet learned the power of the “bosses,” refuses. Whereupon they hit him with a vengeance. They might blow up his car, smash his shop windows, or something worse. Then they give him time to reconsider. Should he persist in his refusal, they will hit him again and again, until he is finally battered into submission.

Not only does the syndicate gain what they wanted from this man, but the incident supplies an opportunity of demonstrating their power, thus providing an example of this man calculated to intimidate other business people in the city.

These methods, it is found, work rather effectively. But the obedience obtained does not emanate from love and appreciation of the gangland chiefs. Rather, they are hated and despised for their methods and obeyed only because there is no other choice.

This question now arises:

“What difference is there between the methods of the criminal chiefs and those which God is supposed to have used in the land of Egypt?”

Be careful to see exactly what the question is. It is concerned with the *methods* used by the one and attributed to the other. It is not asking about *motives* or *character* but about *procedures*.

The answer has to be that there is no difference whatsoever. If the common understanding of God's behavior in Egypt is retained, then it follows that the ways of God, and those who live by robbery and oppression, are identical.

When I put this proposition to a very well-educated person, he quickly replied that the methods used by God were indeed the same as the syndicate, but that God's intention was different. In other words, whereas the bosses used these tactics to further their own selfish ends, the Lord did it all for others.

This is to argue that the end justifies the means, that the methods used by the criminals were unjustified because they were done from selfish motivations, while God's use of the same procedures was justified because He did it from a righteous motive.

But the Scriptures do not support this reasoning. God personally denies that His ways are the same as man's ways. He assures us that they are quite different. Here are His words:

**Isaiah 55**

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither 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.

What God said in these verses is the truth but only if the view of God described above is not the truth. If God did in Egypt what He is understood to have done, then His ways are no different from those of the very worst of men, and He has made himself a liar by saying what He said in this reference.

*But God is no liar.*

He is the truth and speaks only the truth, by which we are to know that another and different understanding of His behavior in Egypt is called for.

Not only does this Old Testament witness call for such a revision. The life of Christ, who did only what the Father did, exactly as He did it, denies utterly the popular version of God's doings in Egypt. Nowhere in the entire lifetime of Christ do we find Him using such methods to secure the desired results. It is impossible to find a single instance for it does not exist.

Yet, in the light of the testimony of our wonderful Saviour who declared that He did only what the Father did, and as He did it, it is incumbent upon those who choose to continue to believe that God acted in Egypt as an oppressor who gained His ends by the use of force, to find a situation where Christ gained His ends in the same way.

This cannot be done. About the only incident which can be construed in this fashion is the cleansing of the temple. Some will argue that Christ threatened the money changers with the whip, but it will be shown that to argue this way is to speak as a man and not as Christ. What Christ really did will become clear when it is seen what God actually did in Egypt.

## 5. Love Gifts

SINCE the witness of Jesus lends no support to the popular view of God's behavior in Egypt, and since God himself has testified that His ways are not the ways of men, another view of God's actions in Egypt must be found; a view that is strictly Scriptural and in perfect harmony with the witness of Jesus. It must speak, not as a man, but as Christ.

The Scriptures of truth testify that:

### **1 John 4**

<sup>8</sup> God is love.

Something of the full force of this Scripture can be appreciated only when it is seen that it does not merely say that God loves, even though this is true, but that He *is* love.

*It is because He is love that He loves.*

Because God is infinite, boundless, endless, and unlimited, His love is the same. It is infinite. This means that there is no point where the boundary or the limit of that love can be found. Therefore, it is written of Him that:

### **James 1**

<sup>17</sup> [With Him there] is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Human love is finite or limited. We love so long as we are loved and then our love begins to fade away. It may and often does come to the place where the intensity of our love is changed to an equal fury of hatred.

In this, the way of God is also different from man's way. No matter how much we may reject God, despise Him, war against Him, insult Him, or separate from Him, His love to us is not changed in the least degree.

One great difference between divine and human love is that God loves, not because of what we are, but because of what He is, whereas people love, not because of what they are, but because of what the person they love is.

This mold is placed on humans from their earliest days when parents convey to the children the idea that if they are good, father and mother will love them, but if they are naughty, then that love will be withdrawn. The child quickly absorbs the idea and practices it in all his relationships with other children. If the behavior of a certain child conforms to his standards and desires, then love is returned, but if the child does not do as he is required, then love is withdrawn. The only factor governing the whole procedure is the lovability of the other person, not the capacity of the first person to love regardless of what the other is.

The same attitude and practice attends entrance into adulthood and marriage. Those who can be loved because of what they are, are sought out, while the others are shut out. The sought-out become the shut-out should they change in their ways to a pattern which no longer meets the needs and desires of the lover.

Because men tend to judge God by their own experiences and make Him to be altogether such a one as themselves<sup>1</sup>, He likewise is seen as One who loves us only while we are lovably obedient to His every requirement. But the fact remains that no matter how disobedient and unlovely we may become, this makes no difference to His love toward us. It does, of course, make a difference to the accessibility of that love, for the very act of disobedience is an act of separation on our part. But this departure by us must not be confused as being a withdrawal of love on His part.

Infinite love is infinite unselfishness. It is entirely and only outgoing. Therefore, when the Lord made the heavens and the earth, He did not do it for himself. He did it for the creatures whom He made. He did it for you, for me, and for every other person who

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<sup>1</sup> **Psalm 50** <sup>21</sup> You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself: but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes.

has ever lived. Consider then, the needs which were created when the Lord contemplated bringing into existence all living things.



When God planned to present the human family with the love-gift of life, He recognized that this was not enough. Imagine being given life, but no home, then being left to drift eternally through the empty, cold blackness of infinite space with nothing to see, no one to communicate with, and nothing to do. Would not nonexistence be preferable? This would be a living death in the worst form.

Therefore, God, in His infinite love and wisdom, purposed to create first of all the love-gift of a perfect home. This He did on

those first days of creation week. But, even this was not enough, for the earth could not be a satisfactory home providing infinite possibilities for development and achievement, unless it was equipped with the necessary powers. The powers referred to are those both outside of man and those within him. A full list is not necessary here. All we need is a few examples to illustrate the point.

Within man are physical, muscular, intellectual, and spiritual powers. Outside are the mighty forces in nature, such as electricity, the sun, gravitation, and a thousand more.

The provision of power created a problem for although it was given only for the purpose of blessing and happiness, it contained the cruel potential for fearful destruction. This is the very nature of power. It is impossible for it to exist without it having the ability to bless or to destroy. This is a self-evident truth, which is demonstrated every day.

Infinite wisdom could not overlook the problem, and infinite love would not leave it unsolved. One course open to God was to program the human mind so that it would automatically choose only the right course. If this was the best that the mind of God could conceive, then this is the way it would have been.

But to adopt these measures to protect the human family against the misuse of power, would have meant the deprivation of the ability to choose and therefore of the power to think. It would have limited, contained, and prevented the highest and richest fulfillments of their desires and ambitions. It would have restricted them to less than the level of the animal kingdom.

If God had given man the opportunity of selecting a solution, this is not the one he would have chosen. Today, men would rather die than live in bondage. More than one organization has adopted the slogan, "Freedom or Death."

A solution had to be found which would provide perfect protection from any dangerous use of power and yet, in no way deny

man the freedom to choose and to think. This required the formulation of perfect laws covering every possible aspect of man's physical, mental, moral, material, scientific, and spiritual existence. Neither the first parents nor any of their children had either the power or wisdom to solve this problem by supplying the need. God, of course, did. In His infinite wisdom and love, He delighted to give such a complete and blessed gift as the laws of His kingdom.

It is a tragedy of the gravest proportions that men only partly see the law as God designed it to be. Those areas of the law which deal with man's relationship to his fellow-men and to God are regarded by most people as being a device invented by God to enforce worship of, and to Him. Nothing could be further from the truth, nor more depriving to God's created subjects.

While such views are maintained, either through sheer ignorance of the real truth or by a stubborn resistance to the light, the true character of God cannot be seen, nor can real fellowship with Him be obtained. Therefore, the full achievement of God's intended purpose for man's ultimate fulfillment and happiness must find its beginnings in the correction of these distorted ideas.

Curiously, and as usual, the concepts held are an interesting mixture of truth and error. There is a ready willingness to recognize and utilize law in the natural and, especially, the scientific field. Research millions are expended annually by universities, governments, and business houses in the quest to better understand and capitalize on the powers in the universe according to law. Students under training for various professions are drilled on the strict importance of obeying law in carrying out their intended professions.

Consider, for instance, the seemingly endless regulations with which an airline captain must comply. Breaches swiftly attract severe disciplinary action or prompt dismissal. Airline operations are conducted thus because the authorities are acutely aware that

obedience to the law is their life protector and preserver. They know this and have no quarrel with it.



Tragically, while there is a willingness to recognize the immense and indispensable value of scientific laws, there is a failure to connect these laws with the Life-Giver. Man sees them simply as something which has evolved out of nothing, but which will elevate his standard of living to the highest and give him the power to put fear into his enemies.

This deficiency of understanding incurs immense losses, for God is not only the Law-Giver. He is also the great Teacher who

longs to initiate His children into the deepest and broadest understandings of these things.

### **Proverbs 9**

<sup>10</sup> The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

He is infinite in knowledge and wisdom which He is ready to impart to all who will receive His instructions. If mankind today would only learn of Him instead of trying to gain all knowledge through their own powers, they would be vastly more advanced and benefited than they presently are.

But, when it comes to moral law, man's attitude is deplorable. He shows himself all too willing to restrain others while he excuses himself from the same obligations. Men reveal by their actions that they want a law which will protect them from other men, but not one which will protect other men from them.

But the law is designed to provide every man with the same impartial and perfect protection. It never favors the one in advance of the other.

There is not a single commandment made by God for His own exaltation, interest, or blessing. To some this may seem unbelievable, but it is the truth. The human mind operates on the principle that the possession of great power is the opportunity to enjoy freedom at the expense of others. Therefore, it is concluded that, inasmuch as God has infinite power, He uses it to exalt himself and satisfy His own ambitious desires.

But God is not man. His ways are opposite from the dwellers on this earth who have departed from His thoughts and ways. Consider the first commandment:

### **Exodus 20**

<sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods before me.

How readily this is interpreted to be an order from God ensuring that His position is fully revered so that He is accorded the

respect and worship He regards as being His due. The command is seen as being made for God's benefit and not for man's.

But this is not so. That stipulation is for the created being alone. God does not need it, nor does selfless love even think of protecting itself. A moment's thought quickly shows how much we need to keep that command in mind.

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. But this is not all. Moment by moment, He personally guides and sustains all these mighty orbs and powers in their correct courses providing them with the energy to continue. He alone can do this. Should any other being replace God, then, with the source of life and energy being dried up, destruction would be the only possible outcome.

The sun, for instance, is a mighty power plant which has to be continually energized by God for it cannot of itself be infinitely self-sustaining. Life on this planet would become extinct should the sun cease to perform its orderly functions. Therefore, it is vitally important that God should not be displaced from His position in command of the sun.

Some will object that we do not have the power to remove God from this role. It is true that we do not have it physically, but there is a way whereby human beings can displace Him. It can be done because God will never force His presence where it is not desired.

When men show by stubborn rebellion that they feel no need of God and therefore desire Him to leave them to manage their own affairs, God does not argue with them. He accepts their insistent demands and leaves them as requested. The rejecters of His love and mercy then find themselves in the midst of powers which have passed out of God's control.

Consider what this would mean in respect to the sun alone. Exactly what would happen we do not know but we can picture the various possibilities without finding one which would permit our

survival. It could simply fade out, or explode. It might veer off into outer space or plunge into a collision with the earth. Whatever way it happened, the earth would cease to support life of any kind.

There has not yet been a situation where every single human being has taken such a stand against God, except in limited areas. Sodom and Gomorrah were cities where it did happen and the same situation developed in rebellious Egypt.



## 6. Moses' Rod

**T**HROUGH the life of Joseph, the eyes of the Egyptians had been opened to behold the love and power of God working for their salvation. The mighty ruler had obeyed God's instructions given through the young man, and Egypt became the most powerful nation on earth.

But prosperity brought apostasy, and soon God was forgotten. Year after year, despite the love and care of God, the nation slipped further and further from Him. By so doing, it was moving closer and still closer to the point where God would be utterly rejected and forced to lay down His control of the mighty powers of nature surrounding it, thus leaving it to its fate.

But an infinitely loving God would not do this without first giving the king a clear warning of what was to happen. So He sent Moses with the rod in his hand to demonstrate what was about to develop. Moses stood in the presence of Pharaoh as God's representative. He did what God told him to do thereby providing God with the means whereby He could tell the king what was about to occur in Egypt.

The rod in Moses' hand was a symbol of the powers which God had put into nature and into man. As Moses held and guided that staff, so God held and controlled those powers. When the rod left the prophet's hand, it changed into a serpent, the well-known symbol of Satan, the destroyer.

The first step was to call upon the haughty ruler to set Israel free. This was a loving invitation to repentance and obedience. It was uttered in the context of impending disaster which emphasized the need for such steps to be urgently taken. Failure to avail himself of the offer made, would open the floodgates of woe upon them until he would be deprived of the power to further retain his slaves.

In order for the work of God to be successful in saving the Egyptians and releasing His people, the king must be given very

clear revelations of what God would actually do. He had to be shown that the troubles about to descend upon them were not God's handiwork but were the inevitable and unpreventable consequences of casting aside the law as a life-preserver.

To teach that to the king, the whole enacted parable of the rods and the serpents was presented. Everything depended upon his being able to read the message therein and then on his being willing to walk in harmony with it. Likewise today, everything depends on our being able to see what God intended the king to see and to walk in accord therewith.

The lesson is as clear as it is simple. While ever the rod remained in Moses' hand, it was never a death-dealing serpent. To become a serpent, it had to pass out of his hands and out of his control. During the whole time that it remained out of his hand and control, it continued to be a serpent, but the moment he grasped it again, it was once more a rod.



The truth could not have been stated more clearly. Unfortunately, the message was lost on the king, but it need not be lost on you and me today. What God desired to convey to the king was this:

“Pharaoh, mighty king of Egypt,” said God, “up until the present time, despite the increasing apostasy which has marked you and your subjects, the rod of power has still been in my hand and under my control. Because of this, the destroyer has not stalked through your land. You have enjoyed wonderful prosperity and blessing. You have made the most of the opportunity to become the most powerful nation on the earth.

“But daily you are separating farther from me, disobeying the very laws I gave you in love to preserve you. You have forced the

gap of separation to widen and deepen until I retain only the most tenuous hold on the powers I gave you in nature and in yourselves. I now plead with you to repent of your backsliding.

“As a demonstration of your willingness now to obey me, and abide by the laws that guarantee your existence, let the Israelites go. I do not wish to see you shattered and destroyed by the fearful suffering you are about to bring upon yourself and your people.

“But, if you refuse to repent, this act will cut the last faint, controlling grip I have on these powers. They will pass out of my hands and when they do they will become elements of terrible destruction. But know that even when they do, I can reach forth and take them again. The instant that I do, they will cease to be destroyers and will again become a rod of blessing.”

With what marvelous love and yearning God appealed to the stubborn heart of the rebellious king. With what pride and disdain, the monarch rejected the outreach of such unchangeable love. His response was to call in the magicians of the realm and have them cast down their rods. Seemingly, they turned into serpents too, but instead of being a one to one situation, it was a case of many versus one. To all appearances, the serpents of Pharaoh would easily consume the serpent coming from the rod of Moses.

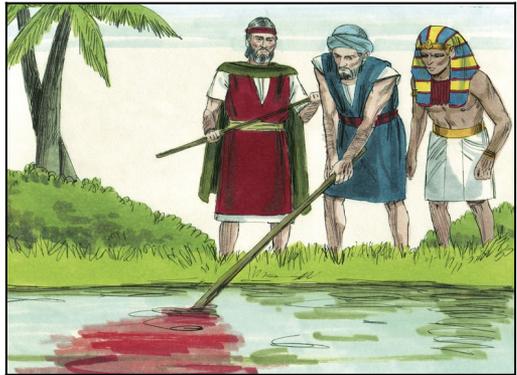


What was the monarch really saying in reply? He was declaring that he had not the least need for God to hold those powers in control. He was well able to live in full independence of God. Let Him release the rod. Let it turn into a serpent of destruction. He had power at his command to more than cope with the powers which God had released from His grasp.

This is still the attitude of man. When trouble seems to engulf him, he turns to his own resources to contain it. If God is thought of at all, it is only as a last resort and, as soon as the trouble passes, He is forgotten. But men cannot manage the powers of God out of His control and direction. When mighty hurricanes sweep in from the oceans, flooding the land, and tearing buildings apart, there is absolutely nothing man can do to stop them. They run their full course. So with earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, great fires, and the like. Man cannot resist or contain them.

Neither could the serpents of Pharaoh handle Moses' serpent. It busily ate up all Pharaoh's serpents, and still remained as vigorous and undiminished as ever. God could never have conveyed the message more clearly than He did here, nor could the king have rejected it more fully.

The next day, with the rod, Moses indicated the place from where the presence of God would first be withdrawn, so that the king could not avoid knowing that what God had prophesied would happen, did happen, and that it was not a mere coincidence.



During the falling of the plagues, God yearningly, and lovingly, kept the door of mercy open. He was ever ready and willing to re-take control of the forces afflicting the Egyptians. But He could do this only if they repented and gave the work back into His hands.

Pharaoh, compelled to recognize that neither he nor his magicians had any power to control those elements of destruction, took advantage of the character of God. When the terrible pressure was upon them, Pharaoh made great promises to God and pleaded with Him through Moses to take the plague away. In re-

sponse, God reached down and took up the serpent by the tail, whereupon it immediately became a rod again. As soon as the trouble passed, Pharaoh's confidence returned, and he forgot his promises to God.

Man is still the same. When bowed to the gates of death by forces beyond his control, he will, in the terror of the moment, call upon God for deliverance while making wonderful commitments to Him. Then, as soon as the trouble is passed, he will forget all the promises and revert to his ways of wickedness.

In 1846, a light steamer was carrying passengers from Portland, Maine, to Boston, Massachusetts, in the USA. A fierce storm whipped the Atlantic into a fury, threatening the lives of the people on board. A passenger described the scene as follows:

We were in great peril. The boat rolled fearfully, and the waves dashed into the cabin windows. There was great fear in the ladies' cabin. Many were confessing their sins and crying on God for mercy. Some were calling on the Virgin Mary to keep them, while others were making solemn vows to God that if they reached land they would devote their lives to His service. It was a scene of terror and confusion....

Through the mercy of God we were all landed safe. But some of the passengers who manifested much fear in the storm made no reference to it, only to make light of their fears. One who had solemnly promised that if she were preserved to see land she would be a Christian, mockingly cried out as she left the boat: "Glory to God, I am glad to step on land again!" I asked her to go back a few hours and remember her vows to God. She turned from me with a sneer.

I was forcibly reminded of a deathbed repentance. Some serve themselves and Satan all their lives, and then as sickness subdues them, and a fearful uncertainty is before them, they manifest some sorrow for sin, and perhaps say they are willing to die, and their friends make themselves believe that they have been truly

converted and fitted for heaven. But if these should recover, they would be as rebellious as ever.<sup>2</sup>

So it was with that powerful Egyptian potentate. When the pressure was upon him, he appeared to repent, but when it was lifted, he showed that there had been no genuine putting away of sin. Each such prevarication had an adverse effect on his mind and character, significantly hardening his heart and thus making him less and less capable of surrendering to God.

This, in turn, separated God from control of the forces surrounding the nation, with the result that a fresh plague burst upon them. Finally, with the tenth scourge, when the firstborn lay dead, the king was so broken, and his land so shattered, that he had no further power to hold the Israelites.

But not one of those afflictions befell them because God had control of the chastising elements. It was only when the control had passed out of His hands, that they could and did come.

This is completely opposite from the ways of the criminal kings of Chicago. Only when the weapons of destruction are in their hands and under their control, do their victims experience pain and suffering. On the other hand, when the forces are in God's hand and under His control, they can never be destroyers.

In the light of the abundant evidence revealing what God really did in Egypt, it is surprising how badly men have misread the records of the event. God took great care through the parable of the rods and serpents, to declare just what He would do in Egypt. God is not a liar. What He said He would do is what He did.

He has also made it plain that He does not work as man works. Man uses force to achieve his ends, but God does not.

To confirm beyond doubt the veracity of these Old Testament witnesses, Christ came to give a personal declaration and demonstration of His Father's character and methods. His persecutors

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<sup>2</sup> Ellen White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White*, p. 99; *Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White*, p. 240-241.

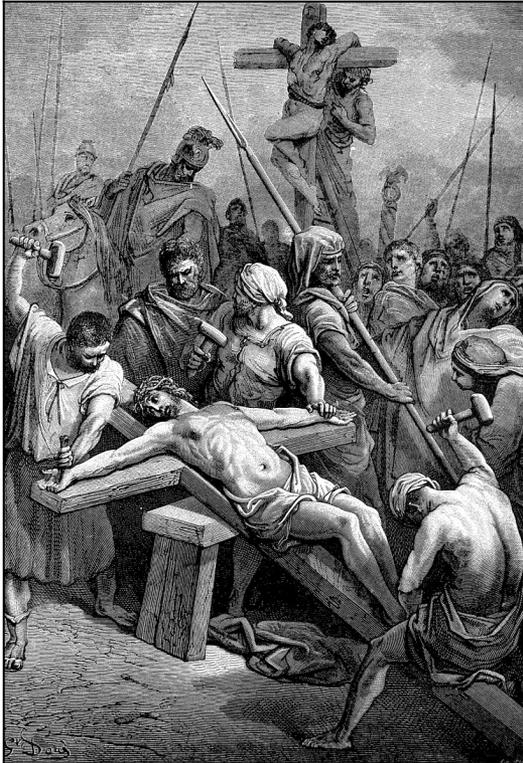
related to Him exactly as Pharaoh did to God, and Christ responded precisely as His Father had done.

They reviled Him, taunted Him, scourged Him, spat on Him, loaded a cruel cross on His back and hung Him upon it. Yet there is no trace of any spirit of retaliation.

Christ did not reach out to grasp the weapons of power to control and direct them in withering destruction upon His foes as He easily might have done. His only response was to cry out with unutterable love and pity,

**Luke 23**

<sup>34</sup> Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.



## 7. Why Not Before?

**T**O BELIEVE that God forcibly subdued the Egyptians in order to effect the release of His people, is to level, by implication, a terrible indictment against the Lord. It is to charge Him with deliberately and callously leaving the Jews to suffer for centuries when they could have been released long before they were.

He who in the possession of omnipotent power, uses it as the means of executing his will, can do what he wishes when he chooses. If this is God's way as so many suppose, then every day that the Israelites continued in servitude, was because He chose not to release them. For centuries, they were ground down in brutal bondage, all the misery of which would have to be accounted to God for failing to exert His mighty power at any chosen time to set them free. God could not be a God of love and at the same time behave in this fashion.



The truth is, God has committed himself never to solve problems by the use of force. Therefore, the timing for the Israelites' release would be determined, not by God's own personal choice, but by the effects of the Egyptians' deepening apostasy. This brought about a separation from God which released destructive powers upon them until they had destroyed their capacity to hold their slaves. Then and only then, could the Israelites go free.

When these principles are understood, no problem will be seen in the fact that the Israelites were left in servitude for so long.

God will not deviate from His ways for He knows that the use of force is self-defeating. Had it been His principle to rule by force, then He would have stamped rebellion out of existence as soon as it manifested itself initially. There would have been no long period of sin in this world.

But sin must be allowed to run its course until it ultimately destroys itself and all who cling to it. Then the Lord will be free to make the new heavens and the new earth with no danger of their defilement.



## 8. Cleansing the Temple

**E**ARLY in His ministry, Christ cleansed the temple of the buyers and sellers. The story is told in *John 2:13-22*. His soul was stirred to the depths by what He saw, and after...

### **John 2**

<sup>15</sup> ...He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables.

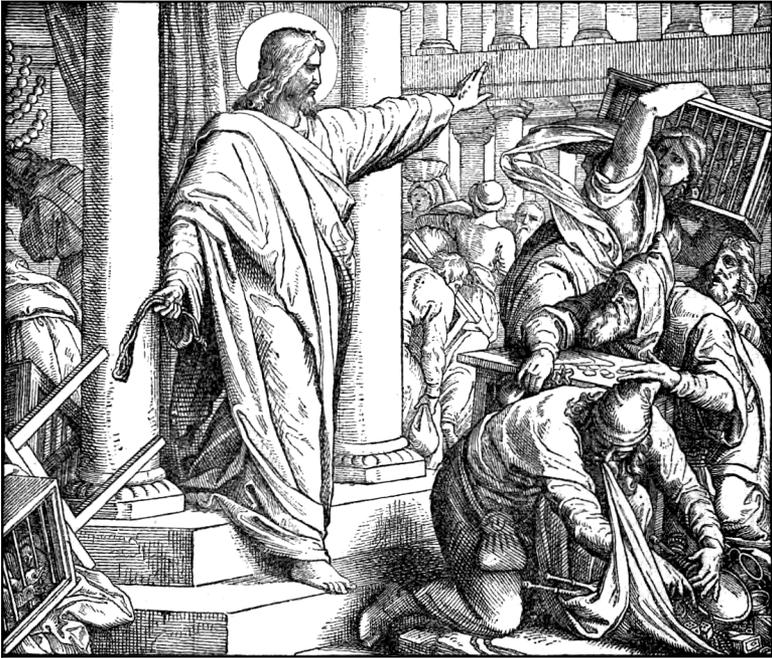
This story can be as easily misinterpreted as the story of the plagues on Egypt, and mostly is. Without question, the simple explanation is accepted that Christ actually threatened to whip those men and would have done so if they had not obeyed Him.

But had He done so, then what difference would there have been between His behavior and that of the lords of gangland? Wherein could He claim that His ways and man's are different?

These questions demand that another look be taken at this incident to see what really happened. This is the New Testament counterpart of the Old Testament story studied above. What God did to Pharaoh, Christ did to the money-changers. It is another dramatization of God's holding and controlling of power. The setting and the actions are slightly different, but the message is the same.

The most significant difference lay in the fact that while Moses allowed the rod to pass out of his hands and control, Christ did not lose either His grip or His control over the scourge.

The events which transpired in each of these times was exactly consistent with the actions of Moses and Christ. Egypt suffered immediate calamities as Moses, by releasing the rod, indicated they would. Christ in the temple however, assured them that there was yet time to repent, for He still retained control over the scourge. Thus, no great disasters overtook them during His earthly sojourn.



Christ's action was also a warning of the danger that their unheeding apostasy would compel Him to release His grip. Should this happen, then the experience of the Egyptians would also be theirs. It is a matter of history that they refused to repent. They turned their backs utterly and defiantly upon God, and the rod did become a serpent as is evidenced by the devastation and slaughter in Jerusalem in AD.

There was no possibility of Christ's striking them with the scourge. That was not His purpose in raising it up. It hung threateningly over them, but, while in Christ's hands, it never touched them. The important thing was for the Jews to keep it there where it could never hurt nor destroy them.

Thus, when a careful comparison is made between the actions of God in Egypt and those of Christ in the temple, it is clear that Christ spoke the truth when He said that He did everything the Father did, exactly as He did it.

## 9. The Testimony of the Cross

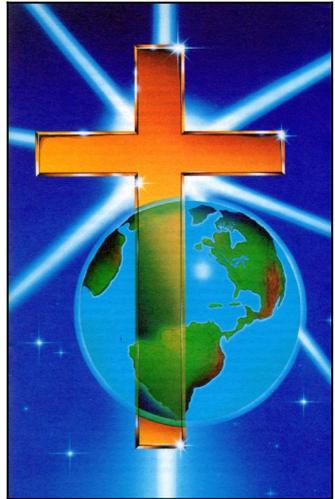
THE cross is the complete revelation of both God and Satan and their respective principles of operation. The nature of the struggle waged at the sacrificial tree permitted nothing short of total commitment by both parties. Nothing could be, or was, held in reserve.

The disguise worn by Satan to conceal his real identity was stripped away, as was the mask he had placed on the name and character of God to misrepresent Him before the universe. From that titanic struggle, the evil one emerged to be seen for what he really was—a being who is so utterly devoted

to the service of self, that he would even sacrifice the life of the One who had made him and who had given him all he had. He exhibited the spirit which he had already put into, and manifested through, the criminal kings of the earth. The way he treated Christ is his example of how he will treat all who do not serve Him.

How deeply grateful we can be that this is not the character of God. Well might we shiver with terror if it was. God and Christ are motivated by another principle altogether—that of self-sacrificing, loving service. They will serve all others no matter what the sacrifice might be to Themselves. They do not make an example of those who do not obey Them. Instead They make an example of Themselves showing that, far from demanding and taking people's lives, They give Their own.

Christ's garment is indeed dipped in blood—His own. Satan also has a garment dipped in blood—the blood of others. How totally opposite the two are. When a careful comparison is made be-



tween the ways of men and of Satan, it is found that they are identical, but nothing of those principles and procedures can be found in the life of Christ or His Father, except as they have been wrongfully accused.

More than this, the way in which Christ died is absolute proof that God does not destroy the sinner. In the Garden of Eden, man elected to go his own way. He disobeyed the law of love, thus casting aside his life-preserver and exposing himself to the fatal results of broken law.

The very day he did this, he would have died as God said he would, but for one thing. The instant man transgressed, Christ stepped in between the living and the dead and said:

“Let the punishment fall on me.”

So that He might receive and bear on our behalf, the punish-

ment which would otherwise have obliterated every one of us, He came to this earth. This is the critical point. Christ did not come to bear any punishment, but only the one which man had incurred. It must be completely self-evident that if Christ came short by even a hair's breadth of bearing our punishment, then we could not be saved. The penalty must



be fully met.

There are two concepts being taught of the way in which the impitent meets his doom. The common one is that a patience-exhausted God uses His omnipotent power to cleanse the universe of the disobedient. In this teaching, the actual death stroke is administered by God.

If this is true, then this is the way Christ had to perish for He had to die our death. If our death is execution at the hands of God, then the Father had to execute His Son.

The other concept is that the sinner separates himself from God. Consequently, God is not able to maintain proper control of the forces both in the sinner and around him with the result that he is destroyed by his own sinfulness. If this is true, then this is the way in which Christ had to die.

From this it is evident that the way in which Christ died is clear proof of the way the unrepentant sinner will perish. Fortunately, there is no mystery surrounding the death of Christ. It happened in full public view, and I have yet to meet the person who would teach that the Father came down to the cross and personally executed His dearly beloved, only-begotten Son. It did not happen that way.

Christ himself gives testimony to what happened. In His final moments, He cried out,

**Matthew 27**

<sup>46</sup> My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

Here is no witness that God was drawing near with slaughter weapons in His hands! Instead He was departing from Christ just as He departs from every unrepentant sinner.

Christ himself was no sinner yet having accepted the weight of the sins of the world, He stood in the place of every transgressor. So truly did He take those iniquities that it was as if He had committed every one himself. It was that weight of woe which was separating Him from His Father. Separated from God, totally at the mercy of the destroyer, sin, Christ died.

In exactly the same way died the Egyptians, the Sodomites, the antediluvians and every other person who has suffered the death penalty. So will sin, at the end of the millennium, obliterate those who refuse the offer of deliverance from its power.

## 10. Higher, Holier Concepts

**G**OD is love. His character, His law, is love. Every act of creation, every plan made, and every step taken in the work of redemption, is an expression of that incomprehensible attribute which pervades every aspect and element of God and His behavior.

God's ways are unchangeable, His principles immutable. The better they are understood, the more warmly and deeply are they appreciated. That love, perceived and received, will flood the soul with light and beauty. Responses will be generated which will harmonize with the thoughts of the Eternal One.

The recipient will be initiated into the glowing circle of life and



beauty which everlastingly emanates from the throne of the Omnipotent, as a living channel through which this glowing stream will reach out to others and through them to still more.

With what wonder and delight will the redeemed enter into the joy of their Lord. To thus dwell in the light which floods forth from the Eternal, is happiness without equal, joy beyond comparison.

Do not imagine that none of this is to be until the return of Christ and the establishment of the eternal kingdom of joy and bliss. For the true child of God, heaven has already begun. The love of God dwells in his heart and the character of God is expressed through his life. Day by day he is learning to think and speak of God as Christ, the One who knew Him best, thought and spoke of Him.

It is a tragedy of immeasurable proportions, that, since the fall, human minds have been darkened by the most serious miscon-

ceptions of the character of their loving heavenly Father. This is the direct cause of the multiplied sorrows and sufferings which have overtaken the earthly family.

The tendency is for children to copy the behavior of their parents. So when God is seen, even though mistakenly, as a being who uses the power at His disposal to enforce obedience and worship, then men emulate the example, by oppressing their fellow-men. This produces countermeasures to resist and overcome these pressures. Inevitably this leads to wars, terrorism, murders, and a thousand other woes.

Obsessed with the protection of their own life and property and the achievement of their ambitions, men will pursue these objectives irrespective of what cost may be exacted from others.

But if they would cease to think as men, to understand instead the true character of God, then they would be motivated to emulate that. The chief concern would then be, not to serve self but to serve others no matter what the cost to themselves. If this was the spirit filling and motivating every individual as it did Christ, there would never be a war, murder, oppression, or any such thing.

The time has come to think no more as a man but as Christ, who showed us the Father as He really is. When the vision of God as brought by Christ is truly and fully seen, then will be opened to all who see it, the treasures of salvation and redemption. The hearts of all will be made glad for:

**John 17**

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

# Appendix: How Did Jesus Cleanse the Temple?

By Frank Zimmerman



**T**HE picture shown above is misleading. Jesus did not exercise judgment by physically beating people. You will find absolutely no record of that in the story. But our carnal reasoning puts in that kind of interpretation because we naturally tend to think that flesh is the greatest force.

## **Matthew 21**

<sup>12</sup> And Jesus went into the temple of God, and **cast out all them** that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves.

How did He cast them out? It doesn't exactly say. But we tend to read into it what our flesh counts as the only effective force: carnal strength. But in the kingdom of God, flesh counts for nothing:

## **2 Corinthians 10**

<sup>4</sup> The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Any man who has struggled against sin, and tried by will power, promises, resolves, self-denials, and personal torments, to

overcome sin, knows in himself that these fleshly methods all fail in the end. But simple surrender and unyielding faith, prevail.

The patriarch Jacob, after many long years of consequences, learned to forsake his fleshly ideas and schemes to further God's work. He returned to the land of promise under God's direction, but was concerned about his brother Esau, whom he had unjustly tricked out of the birthright many years before.

As he prayed during the night, he felt the touch of an unknown person, and assuming it to be an assailant or robber, wrestled with him. Though he believed himself to be trusting God's power wholly, his actions in this case revealed that there was still some confidence in his own ability to deliver himself.

So the divine visitor allowed Jacob to struggle. Finally, as the daybreak came, the Angel touched his thigh and it was immediately crippled. Jacob finally realized he was wrestling with a divine agency, and clung to him, pleading his great need:

### **Genesis 32**

<sup>26</sup> I will not let You go, except You bless me.

He refused to relent, and because he came in the right attitude, as one feeling his desperate need, and seeing help in none other but God, he was blessed. Jacob had come to the place where there was no longer any confidence in fleshly power, but only in the word of God. At that point, Jacob knew he was safe against his brother. If God was with him, no earthly power could work against him.

The Christian battle is spiritual. It is a fight against unbelief and the sin which flows from it, and must be won within the human.

### **1 John 5**

<sup>4</sup> This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

A man who has nothing between himself and God, is secure to do whatever God wills. He cannot be overcome so long as he maintains his trust in God, and obedience to God's commands. He

wins others to God's kingdom not by physical force or fear, but by bringing them the same experience of inward victory that he has experienced. The power which attends him is the power of the Holy Spirit, who convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the kingdoms of this world who count themselves as "righteous" work this way:

1. First they try negotiation, rewards, privileges, promises.
2. When these fail, then they try threats, sanctions, fines, imprisonments.
3. And when these fail, then finally carnal force (guns, bombs, war) are the last resort.

This is how the kingdoms of the world work, because their confidence is in the arm of flesh. That doesn't mean they don't pray. Often they do pray most earnestly that God will bless their efforts and give them success. But so did Jacob before he wrestled with the Angel of the Lord!

But as Jacob learned, and as the nations need to learn, Christ's kingdom is entirely different. The power is in the word of God, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin.

This was the power that Jesus lived by. It was by the word of the Lord that He was protected from Herod, when the angel warned His parents to flee to Egypt; it was by the word that He gained the victory over Satan in the wilderness; it was by the word that He healed the sick; and it was by the word of His gospel that hearts were won to His kingdom.

#### **Luke 4**

<sup>31</sup> And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

<sup>32</sup> And they were astonished at his doctrine: for His word was with power.

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<sup>3</sup> *John* 16:8.

During His ministry, Jesus found a man who also had implicit confidence in the word, and called attention to it:

**Matthew 8**

<sup>8</sup> The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

<sup>9</sup> For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.

<sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Notice that the centurion only asked one thing: “speak the word only.” Only the word. There was no need for doctors, armies, signs or wonders...just “speak the word only.” This is what would heal his servant. And Jesus commended this as “great faith.”

Having established that Jesus exercised His authority by the word of God, we tend to think that in the cleansing of the Temple, Christ had to do “something more.” In this case, we assume, the word alone was not enough. We think that He made a big display of physical strength (like some Kung Fu master in the movies) which so impressed the money-changers that they ran for their lives. But this makes no sense, especially in light of the Bible description of Christ as “harmless.”<sup>4</sup>

One man, armed with a “scourge of small cords” is hardly a threat to a bunch of greedy financial dealers, nor would it make them run away from their much-loved money. You can test this out. Walk into any bank with a “scourge of small cords” and try to chase them all out. They will either laugh at you, or quickly tackle you to the ground until the police arrive. It was no different back then. These men loved their money, and their business

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<sup>4</sup> **Hebrews 7** <sup>26</sup> For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

was also supported by all the authorities in the temple. You can be sure there were men there ready to stop robbers and thieves from interfering with the business.

So how did it really look? How is spiritual power exercised? Christ came into the temple and the Holy Spirit so filled Him and convicted those in the room, that they felt as if they were in the presence of the Judge of all the earth.

How do we know this was so? Because we are told that it will be so again at the Second Advent, when the wicked seek to hide in the rocks and caves to hide from His face.<sup>5</sup> Please note that they are trying to “hide from His face,” not from flames of fire, or lightning bolts!

In the message to the church of Thyatira, Christ describes himself as one with...

**Revelation 2**

<sup>18</sup> ...eyes like unto a flame of fire...

<sup>23</sup> ...which searches the reins and hearts.

Adam and Eve also, after their sin in the garden,

**Genesis 3**

<sup>8</sup> ...hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.

So now those buyers and sellers felt their guilt and could not bear to look upon Him whose eyes searched their inmost secrets. In their overpowering sense of guilt and fear, they forgot all about their money, and fled to hide themselves from the Judge of all the earth.

This kind of authority can only be exercised with the cooperation of the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit, who only has power and authority to enter the minds and thoughts of people.

**Revelation 2**

<sup>23</sup> I am He which searches the reins and hearts.

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<sup>5</sup> **Revelation 6** <sup>16</sup> And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

## **1 Corinthians 2**

<sup>10</sup> But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things.

The whip in His hand was a sign of the divine retribution that was hanging over the Jewish nation. He turned over their tables as a sign and warning to them that their corrupt practices would come to nothing in the end. These symbolic warnings were literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, 40 years later.

You can find this same spiritual power exercised in many other places in the word of God. For example:

- What protected Moses from the power of Pharaoh when he went down to Egypt completely unarmed? One simple soldier from the Egyptian army could have cut Moses to pieces at the command of Pharaoh...yet it never happened.
- What killed Ananias and Sapphira when they lied?
- How did Saul become one of the prophets when he came in the influence of the school of prophets?

These are only a few of the many examples of the power of the word and Spirit to overcome error, hatred, and sin. It is much more effective than mere fleshly power.

## **1 Thessalonians 1 [NASB]**

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

Now read the description of the cleansing of the Temple again:

## **Matthew 21**

<sup>12</sup> And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

<sup>13</sup> And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.

<sup>14</sup> And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them.

Notice that He clearly used the word of God, (“It is written,”) which brought conviction. Those who clung to their sins were filled with fear, and fled. But those who were looking for healing did not flee, but instead came to Him, and found what their hearts desired.

Mere carnal force could not have produced such a result, for it would tend to frighten the weak ones more than the strong ones. If Jesus had used carnal force, the blind and lame would have fled first. But thank God, He only ever exercised the power of the word.

*Therefore, come to Him  
all you weak ones,  
and do not fear.*



