
CHURCH OF THE
G O D

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." – Matthew 24:14

January 8, 2014

Dear Brethren and Friends,

In our weekly Update of the 6th December, I wrote an editorial entitled "Getting On Together". In this I wrote: "The Church of God should be a homogenous group, all pulling in the same direction, with the same goal of growing and overcoming so that we 'may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man' (Luke 21:36). In order to achieve that goal, we must pull together as the people of God, not pull apart."

I have observed over 40 years in the Church of God that many have come and gone, including those whom we may have thought were "pillars in the Church" only to be disappointed. Without regurgitating that editorial, I would just repeat one part that I thought should concentrate our focus: "We see world events coming to a climax with seemingly little time left before Christ's return and it is futile to concentrate on anything that will detract us from looking forward to that wonderful event and all that it means."

How seriously do we take all of the warnings that we see in the four Gospel accounts, the Book of Revelation and many other biblical books?

Our head knowledge may help us to remember many of the warnings that we have been given, and the fact that we are reading this letter hopefully means that we have taken them to heart. For example: "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another" (Matthew 24:10). Our understanding is that this passage of Scripture applies to the Church. With all of the problems following the apostasy of the 1990's, and since, many have been offended and gone off in different and wrong directions, and many more will be offended and leave in the future, but we shouldn't be surprised because it has been prophesied.

We further read: "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:11-12). This is addressing those in the Church who at one time had the love of God, but who have begun to let it slip. That's why it says that the love of God will grow or become cold and so, presumably, it was hot at one time.

Offences can and do occur and will be a challenge for the true Church at the end of this age. The Church does not have perfect people; if it did, there would be no offences, but we know, by practical experience, that some are easily offended, some have problems in forgiving others and some will not be entreated. Peter asked Jesus about forgiving others, as recorded in Matthew 18:21-22: "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" This was recorded just after Jesus had given the action required for conflict resolution.

Jesus also tells us: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9), not the peace-breakers, and the second part of Psalm 34:14 tells us to "seek peace and pursue it."

In a perfect Church we wouldn't need such guidelines, but the fact that these are recorded show

that we need to learn from such examples (compare 1 Corinthians 10:11).

But do we?

It is prophesied that many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another; that many false prophets will rise up and deceive many; and that the love of many will grow cold. It is not a pretty picture when we put all of these end-time traits together in one sentence, but if the Bible is true as we believe it is from cover to cover, then we had better take this information seriously. Head knowledge is not enough; it needs to penetrate every fibre of our being, taking it to heart as a matter of urgency.

It has always struck me as somewhat contradictory that some who espouse the way that Jesus taught agree with the theory but have big problems with the practice. We know that our adversary is on the prowl (see 1 Peter 5:8), and he is much cleverer than we are, but with the help of God's Holy Spirit that we received at baptism, we can successfully withstand those spiritual forces that are arrayed against us. Satan and his demons will fight furiously to throw us off track, but with God's help we can all win through.

Of course, our human nature can be another source of trouble for us, as we may struggle with the fact that someone else may be right and we may be wrong. The thought of losing face (which is only vanity if we have to apologise) may have no appeal, and it is sheer stubbornness and contrary to the way that we have been taught, if we hold a grudge against anyone.

Why am I raising this? It is because it is prophesied to happen, and we need to be truly aware of it so that Satan cannot craftily and cleverly suck us into his wrong ways of doing things. If we do have any of the problems, or situations as mentioned in this letter, it is of paramount importance to rectify such matters immediately and bring us back in line with what God expects of each and every one of us.

What is the alternative? Such occurrences happened in the time of Christ, and this is a warning for us all: "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?' But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (John 6:66-68).

Having committed ourselves to the way of God at baptism, God expects nothing less than conforming willingly to His complete Way of Life as we read in His Word. Falling short must not be an option for us. Many have, regretfully, fallen by the wayside in the past and many more will do so in the future. We should make sure that that doesn't happen to us. There is a lot at stake, and God is watching each one of us.

Let none of us be found wanting.

With Christian love.



Brian Gale
(United Kingdom)