The End of the Church Age... and After

Chapter 13.
Why Obedience is Important

It is a very serious matter to leave an apparently faithful congregation. So, in spite of all that we have learned thus far concerning the command to leave the church, are we absolutely sure we are to leave the church? Let us face this question once more as we continue our study.

If we can still find or still are a part of a church that is reasonably true to the Bible, should we remain there? What are we to do if we could find a church where it appears that each and every doctrine they hold and teach is faithful to the Word of God?

As we consider these questions, let us re-examine God's commands to ancient Israel when Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem. In Jeremiah 29, God gave express commands that no one was to remain in Jerusalem. In verses 16 through 19 we read:

Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

This passage plainly declares that God's judgment was upon all those who refused to go as captives into Babylon. In fact, some did remain and their leaders were murdered. Following this, the remnant went to Egypt where they were under the judgment of God.

In other words, it was God's plan that no one was to remain in Jerusalem. The only way they could come under the blessing of God was to be captives under the care of Babylon, which represents the whole kingdom of Satan.

But God would watch over them, utilizing Babylon to give them protection. They could receive no help or guidance from Jerusalem.

Significantly, God declares in Luke 21:20-22:

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Please notice that God is not saying when we experience Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, but rather, when we see Jerusalem surrounded by armies. Jerusalem and Judea represent all the New Testament churches and denominations. When we see, as we do see, Satan's massive attack on churches all over the world, we are to depart out. This language identifies with the Great Tribulation, and God is commanding the same thing He commanded Jerusalem in Jeremiah 29. Get out of Jerusalem (the church).

No longer are we to be under the spiritual rulership of the church. This command is given because God has ended the era when He used the churches and congregations to evangelize the world.

We are to flee to the mountains even as Lot was told to flee to the mountain when God was ready to bring judgment on Sodom (Genesis 19:17). The mountain or mountains are a reference to God being our help (Psalm 121:1, Psalm 125:1).

Significantly, in Revelation 11, where God speaks of the work of the church being finished, He speaks of Jerusalem (the churches) as Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8).

Significantly, too, as He addresses the subject of the Great Tribulation, He says in Luke 17:32, **"Remember Lot's wife."** She refused to flee, effectively, and ended up under judgment. Those who attempted to remain in Jerusalem in 587 B.C. came under the judgment of God. Remember, we saw this warning in Jeremiah 29:16-19.

The message should be very clear. We must remove ourselves from the church.

In the context of **"Remember Lot's wife,"** God says in Luke 17:31:

In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

The "housetop" is identified with bringing the Gospel. In Luke 12, verse 3, we read:

Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

The "house" identifies with the church. But as judgment comes on the local churches, the true believers are to stay outside the church and bring the Gospel to the world.

God speaks of this sad situation in the language of Isaiah 3, verses 6-8, where we read:

When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer: for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

The local church has ceased to be an institution or divine organism, and it is no longer used by God to serve as His appointed representative on earth.

Because the church era has come to an end, the churches have become dead, just as the church of Sardis long ago became dead (Revelation 3:1). The churches of today have had their candlestick removed even as the church of Ephesus of Revelation 2 was warned that God would remove their candlestick if they did not return to their first love. The local church has ceased to be a divine institution or organism, and it is no longer used by God to serve as His appointed representative on earth.

It is no wonder that it is almost impossible to find a church today that will modify its Confessions to make them more faithful to the Bible. Remember the Bible says that it is God who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. Therefore, if a church no longer has a candlestick, it means God is not working in that church. The elders and deacons are being guided by their own minds rather than by the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 21, verses 5 and 6, the Bible says:

And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

As we learned earlier in our study, these temple buildings represent the churches and congregations that God would build throughout the New Testament time. Those who come into this spiritual temple are gold, silver, and precious stones, and wood, hay, and stubble (I Corinthians 3:12). That is, there are true believers and those who appear to be true believers but actually are not. Thus, each congregation is an integral part of that great temple.

But Jesus declares that there will be a time when there will not be left one stone upon another. That is, the temple will be totally destroyed. It will no longer exist.

But suppose a congregation believes it can remove all of the high places. It will endeavor to be as faithful to the Bible as possible. It then is insisting that it is still a tiny part of the temple that they believe still exists.

But Christ said that **"there shall not be left one stone upon another."** Therefore, that congregation is saying, effectively, that they are more holy than God. That congregation should realize that today, no church can be a part of the temple.

We Must Be Obedient to God's Rules

One might argue, but God will save them if they are elect. True, but God's elective plan is God's business. We are to be obedient to God's commandments. We never want to set up our own rules. We are to be obedient to God's commands. He tells us that the Holy Spirit has been taken from the temple and we are to come out of it. Therefore, if we have a concern for the salvation of our children, we should want to obey God's command to flee from the temple. Wonderfully, it is still the day of salvation, but it is God who sets up the plan through which He works to save.

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And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

True, for more than 1950 years, God used the churches and congregations as a means to accomplish this goal. In spite of the spiritual weaknesses and shortcomings of the church, it was the divine organism employed by God to represent and extend the kingdom of God on this earth. Indeed, there are many glorious chapters in the history of churches as they were more or less faithful to the great commission, go ye into all the world with the Gospel.

But what of today. How can the churches in their spiritual decline minister the true Gospel. And even if all the churches were vibrant with the true Gospel, how can they physically minister to a world that each hour is 10,000 souls greater in population?

Indeed, we must realistically admit that the churches of today cannot by any means fulfill Christ's command to go into all the world with the Gospel. The fact is, if we honestly evaluate the totality of the mission effort that is based on a true representation of the whole counsel of God, we must admit that the situation seems hopeless.

But it is not hopeless. About 200 years ago, anticipating the present situation, God began to make some drastic changes in the world.

After almost 13,000 years of history, mankind has discovered and begun to use radio waves and other electronics. Are people more intelligent today than they were 1,000 or 10,000 years ago? We know that cannot be. Rather, it is obvious that God prevented these discoveries from being made until it was His good pleasure to make them available to accomplish His purposes. And once He allowed mankind to discover electromagnetic waves, etc., it seems that God is allowing mankind to understand and use more and more of these wonderful ingredients that He built into the creation of the world.

Thus, we wonder, does a correlation exist between all of these major subjects that we have been discussing? Let us review.

1. Tremendous apostasy in the congregations and denominations.
2. Exploding population.
3. Exploding electronic knowledge, resulting in enormous advances in mass communication.
4. Increasing blessing, coming to a ministry such as Family Radio as it ministers globally with the true Gospel.

The fact is, the Bible does provide a marvelous synthesis of these things. Once we understand the Bible's teaching on these subjects, we should understand how harmonious all of these phenomena are.

Go to the Ant

One could ask the question: How will that work if during the latter rain there is no spiritual oversight of those who claim to be saved?

God gives us a very interesting and significant answer to this question in Proverbs 6, verses 6-8, where God commands:
Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.
Since God rules over the lowly ant, which has neither guide, overseer, nor ruler, surely He can rule over His children, who at the moment of salvation were given a new resurrected soul, in which they never want to sin again, and who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

During the church age, God utilized fellow humans (pastors, elders, and deacons), to have the spiritual oversight, but that does not mean that God cannot rule directly without such spiritual oversight.

Moreover, we must remember that throughout history, most of the peoples of the world were illiterate, and Bibles were relatively scarce. Therefore, the spiritual rulers in the congregation, who should have been literate and should have had access to a Bible, served a very practical purpose.

Today, the Bible is increasingly available in printed form. Additionally, its message can be heard worldwide by radio, the Internet, satellite, etc.

In any case, we are to remember the principle set forth in Philippians Chapter 2, verse 13:
For it is God which worketh in you [*the true believers*] **both to will and to do of** ***his*** **good pleasure.**

SOURCE: http://www.familyradio.com/graphical/literature/church/new/churchage_13.html