

Espousal Newsletters

By Jim Golden — Article Six — The Anti-Church!

The anti-Christ, as we all know, is Satan. Isaiah the prophet gives us a glimpse into his modus-operandi. "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! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; *I will make myself like the Most High.*" Satan's greatest weapon is deception. Listen to how Jesus responds to a question asked about the signs of the end times. "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" He replied: "Watch out that you are **not deceived**. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them."

Watch out that you are not deceived. Since there is an anti-Christ, and his main power is deception, then it must follow that there is also an *anti-church* that is gripped by the power of this deception, both being deceived and deceiving many also. The Reformers once believed that the Catholic Church was the *Great Harlot*. All those who have ever sought religious freedom have made their enslavers out to be followers of the anti-Christ or the anti-church, yet I fear that by naming a denomination or branch of the Church as the culprit, Satan and his anti-church has been able to escape exposure, finding comfort within the hallowed walls of "Christendom." It should be easy to know the difference between our precious redeemer's voice and the voice of his arch-enemy. On the contrary. The word *anti* means *instead of*, not against, yet it is by very nature against Jesus, because it seeks to eclipse Him with another. It is the power of this imitation that allows the deadly poison of the anti-Jesus to be so easily injected into the hearts of his followers. His ability to appear to be like the Most High is the secret to his success.

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-if that were possible." These words of Jesus can strengthen us as the power of Satan and his anti-church to deceive grows stronger. Satan has Satanists, but I believe they are nothing more than a smoke screen. Any military strategist worth his salt knows that to deal the death blow to his enemy he must divert their attention from the real danger to them. As we while away the hours thinking about how safe we are in our little churches the poison of the enemy has begun to do its crippling work.

How can we identify the anti-Christ and the anti-church? It is not as simple as it sounds and once I share my perspective I run the risk of being spiritually stoned. I believe that the true Harlot was never the Catholic church, nor has it ever been those that sought to enslave others by their teachings. The true Harlot or anti-church is **organized religion**. I know at this point many will be tempted to throw this newsletter in the trash, but

please hear me out. Your life may depend on it.

For centuries Christianity has been called one of the great religions of the world, yet nothing could be farther from the truth. Christianity has absolutely nothing to do with religion. It is a simple, and vital ongoing relationship with our Heavenly Father through the power of His Spirit by the blood of Jesus Christ. With all my heart, I believe that organized religion has done its deadly work of creating a false security in the hearts of her followers. She has sedated and lulled her adherents into swallowing the pacifier of activity and stolen the precious and intimate fellowship of the Father which Jesus bled and died to bring us into.

Listen to Jesus talking to some of these members of the anti-church. "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" I don't know about you, but that should put the fear of God into anyone who reads it. They were deceived until the very end into thinking that they were believers. They thought that their activity qualified them for entrance into the everlasting kingdom. Jesus said He was looking for a relationship with Him, not just manifestations of the Spirit. In fact, He goes so far as to imply that these works of the Spirit performed by those who are unknown by Him are evil. "Why," you say, "how can that be?"

It is here that we must walk very carefully on Holy ground. We must never credit the moving of God's Holy Spirit with the evil of Satan. But, I believe that God will allow those who do not truly know Him to work miracles in His name because of His great love for the ones seeking the touch of His Holy love and life. I can only speak to you from personal experience.

God has used me to raise a man from the dead and to heal two blind people. In all these cases my motives were self-seeking. Either beforehand, or in the aftermath of such magnanimous events, I have sought the approval of man upon "my" ministry. The deep compassion and love of God has seldom been the driving force of my life. Yet, our God is so rich in mercy He has revealed these hurtful ways and is patiently leading me into a more excellent way.

I find myself hungering for His precious presence, and there is an ever growing cry welling up in my heart to simply be His child. Even this cry comes from the Spirit of His Son which He sent into my heart crying "Abba."

In another place in scripture we see a similar conversation taking place between Jesus and those following Him around. In this passage we see a clearer definition of the difference between the true church and the anti-church. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the

kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

I know of no other scripture that so clearly defines what is of importance to our precious Savior as this. The word **love** cries out from the depths of His heart. Yet this love is not to be found within the breast of mortal man. This is the God kind of love. It cannot be purchased from a commodities broker nor invoked by the mere speaking of His name. It can only be obtained by a sincere, recognized, and confessed need. In our deep hunger and emptiness, God's Holy Spirit will pour out His enabling love into the hearts of the yielded, who know their poor and destitute state.

The other evening my wife and I were talking with another couple about God. In turn, each of us were sharing with the others something God was revealing to us about Himself. We suddenly realized that this was what *church* was all about. We were truly gathered in His name and He was in our midst. As we talked we were aware that our words were more like worship than simple definitions of God. They were not just quotes from scripture, but intimate aspects of our Savior He had personally revealed to us by His Spirit. Throughout the course of the evening we realized more and more how enormously awesome our God is, and a growing satisfaction and hunger to know Him in each other began to cover us. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:18 was being answered in our home: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe." We become richer through our shared knowledge of God.

The richness of His inheritance that was being revealed in our friends was truly a feast. As pastors, I believe it is our role to bring the true church to pastures like these, where we may all feast on the Bread that came down from heaven. There are two churches out there. Which one are you perpetuating? Sometimes it is hard for even the wisest of us to distinguish between the two. The only thing we have going for us is His faithfulness. Our role is to fix our eyes on Him and listen to that cry deep in the hearts of

those whom He has purchased with His own blood. It only cries out one thing-Abba! Please believe me, it is the only cry that the Father will never turn away from. Before it's too late ask God for His assessment of your life and ministry. Will all men know that you are His disciples because you have love for each other? Christianity isn't one of the great religions of the world, it is an intimate and loving relationship with Jesus personally, and through each other.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I want to leave you with a closing thought-God is so vast and awesome that to truly see Him He has made a way through all the different and unique personalities He has created. We are each a facet, a window of revelation into the exceedingly precious jewel that is our God.