



COVETOUS OR CONTENTED?

Radical Christianity Series

MAURICE BARRATT

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by **Maurice Barratt**

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Introduction

The real measure of our wealth is how much we'd be worth if we lost all our money.

John Henry Jowett

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:10

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Proverbs 4:23

This fifth book in the Sermon on the Mount series is perhaps the most important, because it is the part of Jesus' sermon that exposes and challenges the fundamental root of all evil. I do not believe that the root of all evil is the devil, I am convinced that it is the covetousness of man's own heart. The power of the devil is his deceit to suggest that our covetousness is justified and will make us more like God.

The whole of Jesus' sermon up to this part has been a preparation for this one exposure, and a person who has not accepted the sermon up to this point will never accept the

statements of Jesus in this area. Until we have been exposed in our secret life and realised that only another secret life will give God the permission to change our heart, we will never be able to accept that all evil comes from man's covetousness.

Dealing with the roots

Jesus lays the axe to the roots and we will accept or reject his statements and live accordingly. His whole sermon hinges on the fact that *where our treasure is; that is where our heart will be.*

In the second part of this book we will look at the *wisdom from above* that Jesus gives a disciple after the secrets of his covetous heart has been exposed. Then we are on the home stretch of the Sermon and in the next and last book we will look at the conclusions and choices that Jesus confronts us with. We will have to decide which road we will walk upon, which tree we will eat from, and which foundation we will build our Christian life upon.

All sin starts in the heart

In the second half of Matthew chapter five, Jesus exposes hypocrisy in his people and shows that we cover the secret life in our heart with our outward self righteousness and respectability. Now in chapter six, Jesus is peeling another layer off and showing us that the hypocrisy is only to cover a deeper root; that of covetousness. All sin emanates from the heart and all sin starts as covetousness.

The very first sin in the world took place in the garden of Eden when Eve *saw that the tree was to be **desired to make her wise.*** In other words she coveted the wisdom that eating the fruit would bring. She was willing to disobey God and his commandment in order to satisfy her own selfish lust.

This covetousness was in her heart before she ever ate of the tree and disobeyed God, and therefore was present **before Eve had sinned.**

The second Adam

All sin happens in like manner. For example, before a person commits adultery the desire for forbidden fruit - in this case someone else's wife - is in the heart. Before a person steals something, the desire for possessions that do not belong to them are in the heart. All sin starts with a wrong desire, a coveting after that which is forbidden to man. That is why all sin is rebellion, for to have what we covet illegally there is only one way to fulfil that desire - disobedience.

Only the obedience of the second Adam could free us from the penalty - the curse of eating the fruits of covetousness. We shall see as we pursue this teaching of Jesus that there are now two masters that a Christian can serve and they are not God or Satan. The two masters that are vying for servitude in a Christian's life are God and Mammon — God, or the love of money.

Money is neutral

Let me state clearly before we look at this subject, and I shall repeat it again in this book, that it is the love of money, and not money itself, that is the problem. Money itself is neutral. Adam was born without the need for any of it and the disciples were told to take none of it for preaching the gospel.

However, rich ladies supplied the material needs of Jesus and his disciples and Solomon was the richest man who ever lived, and God supplied it for him (1 Kings 3:1-13). It is not about the money itself, it is about the heart, and it is about covetousness.

Part I
God or Mammon

Chapter 1

What is Covetousness?

Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:5

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. No, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, you shall not covet.

Romans 7:7

To understand covetousness we must go back to the garden of Eden and look a little deeper at the first sin committed, and even before Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit. They had not sinned until they had eaten of the fruit; that is until they disobeyed God. However, it is very obvious from scriptures that Eve desired the fruit and desired to please herself rather than obey God. This desire

was **before sin had entered the world.**

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and **a tree to be desired** to make one wise, she took of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat* (Genesis 3:6).

Satan told the truth

Satan, through the serpent, had told Eve the truth - that if she did eat the fruit her eyes would be opened and she would know the difference between good and evil.

Adam was made in the image of God with the natural desire to choose his own good and evil. God's test for him was to give Adam the means to exercise his good desire and to rule himself, by placing in the garden the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God then asked him to decline that choice and let God be his God. God wanted Adam to submit to God's will rather than his own even though God had given him the free will to rule himself and to decide what was good and what was evil. His wrong choice plunged the world into sin and it has never recovered. Indeed, it will not recover until Jesus comes again and reigns on this earth.

Self Rule

God never intended that man should rule himself and all sin can be traced to this covetousness - to decide for ourselves what is good and what is evil; to make our own morality and become God.

The lust for power to rule ourselves and to rule others is at the very heart of the Babylon and Antichrist system and the love of money is the power to accomplish this.

However, no one wants money for itself, they want it for its buying power. Money can purchase material possessions, such as houses or land, priceless treasures and sensual experiences. But it is the spiritual results that man pursues and money is only the means. This is because most of the things that money can buy are not even material.

Spiritual things can be bought

Money can purchase many spiritual things with its deceptive power such as peace of mind, security, or power to control people and situations. Because the basic desire is to rule others, or just to have power over our own lives, the love of money becomes the root of all evil.

I have now moved into areas that really need whole books to discuss, but to simplify all I have written up to now let me say that **covetousness is the desire to rule our own life.** To accomplish this we have to be disobedient because God expressly said; *do not eat of the tree* that will give you this power. All the world, and unfortunately the Church, has been plunged into this battle of good against evil; from occult inspired films to presidents of whole countries, from holy water to casting out devils.

Obedience is the key

For example, when we cast out devils we are not fighting evil we are simply obeying the commandments of Jesus: *heal the sick, cast out devils.* The problem is that what man thinks is good or evil can be very different from what God thinks is good or evil. We are not to align ourselves on one side or the other we are simply to obey. Even the knowledge of good can not be good when God had forbidden it. God will certainly fight for us, but it is also true that if we

disobey God's instructions then God will fight against us. The whole of the history of Israel is of God fighting for and God fighting against his own people.

Captain of the Lord's host

When Joshua asked the angel of the hosts of God whose side he was on, he received a surprising answer. The angel said he was *captain of the Lord's hosts*. In other words he didn't take sides. If they were obedient God would ask him to fight for them, but if they were disobedient then God would ask him to fight against them and for their enemies. (See Joshua chapter 5, and the history of Israel up to their captivity in Babylon.) Because covetousness is so fundamental to our earthly lives Jesus tells us that we must not covet anything on this earth, but we must seek treasures in heaven. We will always desire one or the other and I will look more closely at our choices in the next few chapters.

Chapter 2

Treasure on Earth - Covetousness

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

Matthew 6:19

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Luke 12:15

Jesus says in Matthew 6:19 that we are not to store up treasures on earth. Note carefully, that he is not against storing up treasure, for in the next verse he tells us that we **should** store up treasure. It is the place that we are storing the treasure that concerns Jesus - earth or heaven.

Before we look at the place we are to store treasure we must establish what kind of treasure Jesus is talking about. It is very easy to come to a conclusion for Jesus tells us

that thieves can break through and steal, and rust and moths can corrupt this treasure. This treasure therefore, must be material things, for rust and moths could never have a detrimental effect on spiritual things. Love, peace, joy, or the gifts of the spirit, can not be stolen by thieves, or corrupted by rust.

So, we have established that Jesus is talking about material goods. However, the operative part of the sentence is not goods, but treasure. He says do not store up treasures on earth, so what kind of material things are treasures? How do we define our treasure, for not all Christians are wealthy?

What do we value?

Our treasure is **what we value**, and not necessarily the material value of the goods. It is what I would not like to lose, or what I would insure so that it can be replaced if stolen or corrupted.

If someone stole the contents of my dustbin I would not worry at all because it is what I have estimated to be worthless. I would not insure the contents of my dustbin, for it has no value to me and it needs to be thrown away and burnt. However, I may value things that are not expensive such as objects of sentimental value. For example; my children could also constitute my treasure.

Don't worry

Jesus is not teaching here that Christians should be poor and neither is he teaching that Christians should be rich. Poverty and wealth are perceptions measured against each other. Jesus is not teaching against having possessions, he is teaching against covetousness. He is saying we should not worry about the things that 'the world' worry about;

food clothes and possessions. He says that these things the world value must not be important to us.

Four times in the rest of the chapter Jesus tells us to *take no thought* - do not be anxious about food, clothes, life and the future and we will look at these four basics later in the book (see Matthew 6, verses 25,31,34).

Nothing in - nothing out

The law of Moses in the Old Testament says that we should not covet things that belong to other people, *You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbour's* (Exodus 20:17).

But, it seems to me that under this present dispensation of grace Jesus is saying that we should not even covet our own possessions. We should hold all our possessions very lightly for we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing material with us when we leave. Everyone leaves this world a beggar, for we can not even take our own bodies with us when we die; we have to leave them here on this earth to rot (see 1 Timothy 6:7).

In I Timothy 6:5 Paul warns the young minister to withdraw himself from those Christians who teach that material gain is godliness. Unfortunately, modern young ministers are drawn to these very preachers. It breaks my heart when I go to third world countries and see the damage it has done to these young innocent ministers who have been seduced by this teaching and are now running madly after the greedy way of Balaam. It is changing them into greedy and proud hirelings.

How can I know if my material possessions are my

treasure? It is not difficult if I am willing to be exposed. Jesus says that *where our treasure is our heart is also there*. Therefore, we must ask; "where is my heart, what do I love?" Do I wake up thinking about golf, football or my new car? When I have a spare moment at work does my mind go to home furnishings, or my garden? Do I spend hours dreaming about my holiday in four months time? Then, I suspect that all these could be my treasure because my heart pulls me towards them. We are always drawn towards our treasure. We can not love God and ourself at the same time.

The rich young ruler

There is a very revealing incident in the gospels where a very wealthy young man came to Jesus and asked the question. *What good thing must I do to have eternal life?* (Matthew 19:16) He wanted a secure place in eternity. Jesus told him to keep the commandments. That was what he should do to inherit eternal life - keep the commandments by faith. Jesus had not shed his blood and the young man would be justified by faith.

It is hard to believe that he asked the next question. He said, "which commandments?" How stupid. All of them of course; but his question showed that his heart was not pure and he was already looking to justify it. Jesus began to tell him the commandments and I am sure the man was mentally ticking them off, for he had not murdered or committed adultery.

On automatic pilot

He was on automatic pilot for he imagined that his heart was pure and so when Jesus added; *and love your neighbour*

as yourself, I am sure that he just mentally ticked it off as though he had kept it the same as he had kept the others. He said "I have done **all** these from my youth", but he was deceived for he did not love his neighbour as himself, and Jesus exposed him by saying; *If you want to be perfect sell what you have and give to the poor and come and follow me* (whole story Matthew 19:16-22). This perfection is not to do with eternal life it is about how we live in this world (see Matthew 5:48).

Self deception

The young man went away sorrowful for he was very rich. He could not even give a portion of his wealth away - unlike Zacchaeus who gave half of his goods to feed the poor. Why didn't he offer a part, or even a very small amount as a token that he loved his neighbour. No, he didn't even offer a shekel. What a deceived and pathetic individual. He wanted to hang on to every penny he possessed. What a tragic life. He had been exposed; for if he did not love his neighbour, then neither did he love God. His whole life was a lie.

A Christian may have eternal life by faith, but that is not the criteria for loving God. Jesus said, *if... you love me keep my commandments*. This rich young ruler could not obey this difficult command of Jesus. He would rather be disobedient and sorrowful than obedient and happy. Let me state again that riches are not wrong, it is the love of them that deceives us.

This young man had eternal life, but he would miss the reign of Jesus and would not be part of the bride of Christ.

The deceitfulness of riches

The third category of person in the parable of the sower

had received the gospel and been fruitful - that is, they had grown in grace and showed the life and character of Christ in their lives. But, *the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches* deceived and choked the life of Jesus out of them and they *became unfruitful*. I believe that the majority of modern Christians fit into this category. They have been deceived by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. How sad this is!

Jesus told a parable of a rich covetous man who when God blessed him with more than he had ever had, decided to build more barns, **store his goods** and take his ease. Jesus says that he was a fool, but not because he was rich. It was because he had not stored any riches in heaven.

But God said unto him, you fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be, which you have provided? (Whole story in Luke 12:15-21.) Jesus told this parable as a warning to guard against covetousness. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses (verse 15).* He ends with a stern warning, *So is he, a fool, that stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

Talk is cheap

My conclusion to this chapter is that if we have treasures on earth then we are covetous. If we have possessions that we would be just as happy without, then they are not our treasure and we prove we are not covetous. The only problem with this is that we need to prove that our possessions are not our treasure and we can not do that by stating it, or even by believing it.

If I have a million pounds in the bank and I say that it is not my treasure, and I also say that if God asked me, it

would be easy to give it all away, it does not mean a thing whilst it is still secure in my bank. I have not been tested, so I do not know if I would give it away if God asked me.

Until I start to prove to myself and to God in some practical way then my thoughts can never become facts, or perhaps a better word would be truth.

The rich young ruler believed he wanted to be perfect, but when Jesus asked him to demonstrate it he failed miserably and I fear that the majority of Christians would also fail this test if God required it of them. Talk is cheap and the Gospel of Jesus is in demonstration and not just words. Let us make sure that we do not just pay lip service to the Sermon on the Mount. Let us be people who **do** rather than people who believe, as opposed to people who only believe that they believe.

Chapter 3

Treasures in Heaven - Contentment

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

1 Timothy 6:6

No man that wars, entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:4

In the last chapter we looked at treasures on earth, and discovered that Jesus tells us not to store it. Now we look at the positive side where Jesus tells us that it is good to store treasure in heaven. What treasures can a Christian store in heaven whilst they are still on earth? At first glance we would think that they must be spiritual things as opposed to material ones, but somehow this does not fit in with what Jesus said in the parable. He used the same examples of moth, rust and thieves, as though heavenly treasures were also material things. I believe that treasure in heaven is also

about material things. I know that this may seem an unusual interpretation, but let me try and explain my thinking. Can love, peace, or the gifts of the Holy Spirit be stored for later use? I do not think so.

We will not need the spiritual gifts in eternity on the new earth for 1 Corinthians 13:9-10 tells us that they will be done away with, and peace, joy, and love are obtained for eternity by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and not because I somehow store them up in heaven.

The kingdom on earth

Many Christians are confused because they do not understand about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said that the kingdom does not come with observation, and that the kingdom of God is within a person. That is because God's physical kingdom (Israel) in Jesus' day had been destroyed and they were under Roman rule. Until there is a king again in Israel there will not be a physical kingdom of God on earth.

We know from the bible that Jesus will come the second time as king and establish his kingdom on earth and fulfil all the prophecies that still have to be fulfilled about the kingdom. These include peace on earth, the lion lying down with the lamb, and eating straw like an ox. Jesus will sit on the throne of his father David and the restoration of Israel will be complete.

Kingdom treasure

This coming kingdom is where we will spend our rewards, our treasures, and I believe that heaven is just the bank where God is storing them for us. Preachers are happy to quote that "the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the

just" and of course it is true, but I believe that this wealth is for the coming kingdom and not for this present church age. Footnote 1

Jesus said that he was going away to prepare a kingdom and to return with it. Revelation 22:12 says; *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* What kind of rewards is he talking about? Material possessions without a doubt, that have been stored in heaven.

The judgement seat of Christ

The parable of the talents, in Matthew 25, gives us a good insight into this very situation. The parable is in the context of Jesus' answer to a question from the disciples. They asked Jesus "When will be the end of the age and your return". Jesus said that when he comes again *the Kingdom of heaven will be like...* and he tells three parables. One is the parable of the talents. It is about stewardship and most Christians believe that in this parable Jesus is the master and that we, his children, are the servants who will have to give account at the judgement seat of Christ. This agrees with what Paul says; *For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Trial by fire

Paul talks about this judgement and the rewards or loss that it will entail. *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he*

shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

The reward, in the parable of the talents, for good stewardship was authority and power over cities. This should not be spiritualised. I have found that whenever there is a hard saying in the New Testament then the tendency is to give it a spiritual meaning and reject the often obvious and plain physical conclusions.

One thousand years reign

In the Beatitudes Jesus says that the meek shall inherit the earth, which surely means all the possessions in it as well. Revelation 20:1-6 plainly says that Jesus will reign for a thousand years after the Antichrist has been disposed of, and this is consistent with the prophecies of the Old Testament and of the teachings of Paul in Corinthians and Thessalonians.

Paul tells Timothy, a young minister, that *those who suffer with Christ will also reign with him* (2 Timothy 2:12). When heaven and earth have been destroyed by fire and a new heaven and earth is created, Jesus will not be king for he will have handed that kingdom back to his father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) and we will be **the family of God** throughout eternity, and will not need a political or kingly order.

We need to prepare now

The only possible consistent explanation for all these scriptures is that Jesus will come again and reign on this earth after he has judged his church for rewards or loss, and that the rewards will be the material treasures that have

been stored in heaven, put to their account, for his faithful bride. It is a wise person who prepares for the future and has riches stored up in a secure place (heaven).

This is what Jesus is talking about in his sermon. We have a choice whether we store up riches to spend in this life, if we live long enough, or if we will have the faith to store up riches to spend when Jesus returns to reign on this earth.

The 'Kingdom Now' doctrine is not wrong in its principles, it is the timing that is wrong and because of this, those who preach it are actually preaching covetousness. The doctrine allows that Christians can reign on this earth even before Jesus is reigning as King.

You will have to decide where you are storing your treasure, but remember that where your treasure is ***that is where your heart will be***. Paul tells Timothy to flee those that teach that *gain is godliness* for it shows a covetous heart, but he also says that *godliness with contentment is great gain* (I Timothy 6:6). Our treasure will reveal the true condition of our heart - whether it is contented or covetous.

Practical outcome

If we are to accept that we must store treasures in heaven then we need to know how we can practically store them. One man said that treasure in heaven is stored up as treasure on earth is laid down. Proverbs 19:17 says; *He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the LORD; and that which he has given will he pay him again.*

Christians know that God is no man's debtor, and that you can not out give God. But, they are told to expect it in this life so as to increase their position alongside the status and praise of men that automatically comes with it. This is beggarly thinking, because we will lose all God has blessed

us with as soon as we die. But, if we are not looking for rewards in this life and are storing for the future, our true retirement, then we will have treasures that we will be able to enjoy when the kingdom comes.

Let me encourage every reader of this book to refuse to live their lives for the tinsel and the fragile fading possessions of this world, and to live unselfishly for the coming kingdom and its rewards that Jesus will bring with him.

What a wonderful thought that we will share the kingdom and all its power and riches with our Lord and Saviour, *saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive **power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*** (Revelation

Footnote 1

See Alex Robertson's book on the kingdom of God, 'Manifesto for a Revolution', Published by Barratt Ministries Publications. ISBN 0-9528222-2-9

Chapter 4

The Light of the Body

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:22-23

The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD tries the hearts.

Proverbs 17:3

How good is the knowledge of good; when God forbids it?

Arthur Burt

Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD'S servant?

Isaiah 42:19

Jesus is still dealing with the covetous heart when he talks about *the light of the body*. Jesus often uses the natural

body that we all understand, to show us the parallel spiritual application that we often do not understand.

The human eye is always drawn towards the light, for it is the light that enables us to see. We do not look with our eyes we only allow the reflection that comes from the light hitting the object we are looking at so that our brain can determine what was reflected.

The mirror of the soul

We say that the eyes are 'the mirror of the soul' and this is biblical, for what our eyes see, affects our spirit, not our brain. Our brain is only the mediator between our eyes and our spirit. Our body only acts because our spirit determines it. Our brain - the body's biological computer - as an intermediary, knows how to express feelings through our body - our outward actions.

Jesus is saying that what we see and covet is what we will be drawn towards and our whole body will be pulled in the direction of this treasure. That is why we must be careful where our treasure is because whether we realise it or not the fact remains that what delights our eyes will captivate our hearts and will determine our reward or reprimand when Jesus comes again to judge his Church.

Satan offers us light

It is a common error of Christians to believe that God offers us light and the devil offers us darkness. The devil always offers us enlightenment and as the bible says he *is transformed as an angel of light*. Lucifer, who I believe is the antichrist (Satan personified) means 'shining one' and he will deceive the whole world with his enlightenment.

All mystic religions; humanism, witchcraft and the

occult, are offering hidden wisdom and illumination, not darkness. Eve was drawn toward the hidden knowledge of good and evil. She coveted that revelation and disobeyed God to obtain it. Her light became darkness, as it will for us when we are drawn towards the wrong treasure.

False light

The enlightenment of the 18th century, although declared dead by many, has never been more alive. Our modern concept of equality and rights owes its origins to this false light. The statue of liberty in the USA is a pagan deity given by France and has the inscription, "Liberty, enlightening the world". The very USA constitution, although shrouded in religious language is, at its base, a humanistic document. Jefferson spent time in France and was greatly influenced by enlightenment philosophies. Footnote 1

Perhaps we can understand a little more why Jesus says such radical things as; *if your eye offend you pluck it out* (He is talking about adultery), or why John says of the world and its wisdom:

*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, **and the lust of the eyes**, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world* (1 John 2:16).

Seeing is not believing

It is hard to be covetous without the image. We are in a world where image and images dominate our lives. It is not an accident that Jesus was **the word** made flesh and not the image.

Image is very deceptive and seeing is not believing. Television is the most deceptive medium the world has ever known, and although it can be used for good, the damage

that it does because of its inherent deceptive processes far outweighs the little good that it does. If this seems naive I recommend a book by the late Malcolm Muggeridge, who was himself a media personality. He puts forward a very convincing case on this subject. Footnote 2

Jesus says in verse 22 of Matthew chapter 6 that *if our eye is single then our whole body will be full of light*. Single means pure and focused, and I believe single is a good word because in the midst of the garden of Eden there were two trees; the single tree and the double tree. Let me explain; the tree of **life** was the tree that Eve was supposed to eat of, and it only produced one thing - life. If she had only eaten of that tree her whole body would be full of light.

Single or double tree

Eve however, partook of the tree of the knowledge of **good and evil** - the double tree, and she immediately became enveloped and blinded by the darkness. Jesus says in verse 23, *If your eye be evil (or double) then your whole body will be full of darkness*. Eve coveted the hidden wisdom; the illumination of knowing and choosing between the good and the evil, and she plunged the whole creation into spiritual blindness and darkness.

How many good men in the ministry, whom God has blessed with supernatural and natural gifts, run the greedy way of Balaam when they have **seen** the results and benefits that the gifts initiate. Covetousness is the bane of so much of modern Christianity.

Jesus, in this sermon, makes a remarkable statement, that *if the light in you* (and he is talking to the disciples not the multitudes) *becomes darkness, how great is that darkness*. Is it possible to be a child of God and walk in darkness? Yes, it is very possible and it is much easier than

we would think. John says that if we hate our brother (and again he is writing to Christians) then we are walking in darkness and we have become blind. *But he that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes because that darkness has blinded his eyes* (I John 2:11).

In the light, yet walk in darkness

The Pharisees in Jesus day were in this category. They were God's people but their covetousness had made them blind, and because they were leaders Jesus said that they were *the blind leading the blind* (Matthew 15:14).

Surely the preachers today who teach Christians to seek riches and fame and security in this world are no different. These teachers know the light, and yet they walk in darkness because their eye is not single and their treasures are all on earth. Jesus said that when the blind lead the blind *they both fall into the ditch*.

The context of this accusation of Jesus is interesting because it was in response to the criticism of the Pharisees. They said that Jesus did not wash his hands before eating, which was against the tradition of the elders. Jesus said that what goes in the mouth does not defile a person, for the body can take out the poisons and with a bowel movement remove the rubbish.

Satan has no direct access to our hearts

Unfortunately, the heart of man does not have a bowel movement and what goes in - through the senses, **mainly the eyes** and ears - defiles the heart and later comes out of the mouth. The lust of the eyes has defiled so many Christians and although they have revelation, the light of

salvation, they have become blind. They *are walking in darkness and do not know where they are going*.

I believe that the tempter, Satan, has no direct access to the hearts of men, and so has to tempt us through our senses and show us the forbidden fruit. When we eat of this fruit then our hearts become darkened.

Satan offered Jesus covetousness

Satan, when tempting Jesus in the wilderness, **showed** him *all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them*. He was offering Jesus covetousness. He wanted Jesus to desire and obtain them before the cross. He was offering the kingdom without the suffering just as many are offering the crown without the cross in this generation.

Thank God that Jesus had a single eye and that he set his face like a flint as he walked towards the cross. He knew without doubt that he would obtain all the kingdoms of the world as his inheritance when he returned the second time to this planet.

The mouth betrays the heart

I have to warn all Christians that sooner or later our eyes will affect our hearts and there are only two ways our eyes can look; treasure on earth - covetousness, or treasure in heaven - contentment, and sooner or later our mouth will betray what is in our heart. *Every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men don't gather figs, nor of brambles gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks* (Luke 6:44-45).

Footnote 1

Ref to the enlightenment [www.wsu.edu:8080/brains/hum 303/
enlightenment](http://www.wsu.edu:8080/brains/hum%20303/enlightenment)

Chapter 5

God or Mammon

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:24

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

Matthew 6:24 starts a new paragraph and is a simple statement. *No man can serve two masters*. This is an obvious statement and not one that a reasonable person would contradict. Jesus also says that if we love one we will hate the other and if we hold to one we will despise the other. Again this is reasonable for the intensity that we have for one master will lessen the intensity that we have for the opposite master. The surprise in Jesus statement is his choice of masters. I often wondered why Jesus said that *you can not serve God and Mammon*. (Mammon is a word of Aramaic origin meaning confidence, i.e. wealth, personified.)

I had always believed that the two masters anyone could serve were God and Satan. However, I can not find any

scripture that gives these two options for a Christian, and that is who Jesus is addressing. After studying the Sermon On The Mount I can understand why Jesus says that we are serving God or Mammon, for the battle that I, and all Christians have, is not with the devil, but with self.

Saved and serving mammon

Eve's problem in the garden of Eden was that she wanted, coveted after, what the devil offered her. The devil has no other power than the power to tempt us. He offers us the 'carrots'. The problem is that we all love 'carrots', and we sin because we *are drawn away from God by our own lusts* (James 1:14). We have a choice between God's will and our own lust - covetousness. The choice is God or Mammon. A redeemed Christian can not serve Satan directly, but he can serve mammon. He can serve this world's goods, his own life and security, and still have his salvation by faith.

The love of money

I have filmed a whole series of teachings on the subject of '6000 years of Babylon' and I intend to write a book on this subject as soon as I finish the Sermon on the Mount. In these studies I show that this world's systems, that consist of politics, wealth, culture and pride, are all based on the love of money. The devil has used riches to seduce the whole world into the Babylonian system. Read Revelation 18:10-19 where John in his vision sees the fall of Babylon. It is the fall of all culture and politics, but most of all the destruction of the commerce and wealth that this world covets after, and the power that it gives to politics and culture. It is with this statement in mind that Jesus gives us a conclusion, *therefore*, and a way to live above covetousness. We will look at this lifestyle in the following chapters.

Part 2.

Take No Thought

Chapter 6

Your Life or His?

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life ... Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Matthew 6:25

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Luke 12:15

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

After his statement about God and Mammon, Jesus is still trying to expose our covetousness, but he is moving away from the roots (our hearts) to our minds - that is, our conscious thinking. It is only in this area of our minds that

change can begin. God can not change our covetous hearts unless, and until, we change our conscious thinking, and are willing to renew our minds and attitudes.

I have covered all this in book one of this series, 'Will the real Christians please stand up', where I explained the difference between our hearts and our minds, and that all learning has to do with repetition. Footnote 1

Brainwashing with consent

The only difference between brainwashing (which is evil) and renewing of our minds (which is good) is that brainwashing is without our consent and imposes that which we do not want to believe, and renewing our mind is a conscious decision to change our thinking by repetition and with known consequences.

In the rest of chapter 6 Jesus is now telling us how to think differently in our conscious minds. He says that we must take no thought, that is, we must not be anxious or worry. He talks about five things that are very basic to our existence that we should not be anxious about - life, food, drink, clothes, and the future.

The first thing he talks about is our life and this what we will now look at.

Thinking like Jesus

When Jesus says *take no thought for **your life*** he is not talking of our physical life or our existence, for of course we constantly have to think and plan. If I do not shop for food then the cupboards will be bare and God does not want to do a miracle each day to feed us when we can plan for ourselves. If I don't plan to fill my car with petrol then I will come to a stop and again I can not believe God wants

to do miracles because of my laziness or lack of planning. So which life is Jesus talking about? It is **my** life, the life that **I** want, the right to choose what **I** do and where **I** go and how **I** live. Perhaps **my lifestyle** would be easier to understand. The bottom line is **my independence**.

We will now look at the covetous life - the life that lives for mammon. Jesus tells us to concentrate and think about the life of Christ in us, in other words the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, the beatitudes lifestyle, the loving our neighbour instead of loving ourselves lifestyle.

It's my life

In Mark 8:35 Jesus says that if we try to save our life we will lose it. If I seek all the things that the world seek, which Jesus says are the five things I have mentioned (independence, drink, food, clothes, and the future) then we will lose the life of Christ. But if we are willing to lose our life and seek the kingdom lifestyle then we will gain the life of Christ. Jesus says; *For whosoever will save **his life** shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose **his life** for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he were to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* (Matthew 16:25-26)

What a challenge to any minister of the gospel who is teaching that *gain is godliness*. What will it profit to gain this world's goods if it corrupts (and it always does when **we** seek them) the life of Christ? Gods way is that we should turn our back on the possessions and status of this life and seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the things we need - food, drink and clothes - will be added to us, for *our heavenly father knows that we have need of*

those things even before we ask for them.

Paul understood that you can only serve one life at a time and, writing to the Corinthian Christians, he says that his own selfish flesh life and all it entails has to die so that **the life of Christ** may be manifest in his mortal body. We only have one body, but there are two lives that can be manifested through that body - our life, or the life of Christ. The life that we manifest in the flesh is at the expense of the death of the other life. If Jesus manifests, then Adam dies. If I live Christ dies. Only one can be in control at any given time.

*Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that **the life** also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that **the life** also of Jesus might be made manifest in our flesh* (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

Living by his faith

To the Galatian Christians Paul repeats this principle that one life has to die for another to be manifested in our bodies. He says that he is crucified with Christ. Obviously Paul is not talking about a physical death, but death to his old nature that seeks to serve mammon. He claims that the life that he now lives in the flesh is no longer his life - he now lives by **the faith of the Son of God**. There is another life manifesting through his natural body.

I can not live the Christian life. If self lives the life of Christ it would be self righteousness, but we can die to our life and allow Christ to live through us. *Christ in you the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27). The modern versions of the bible say that Paul lives by faith **in the Son of God** but this is wrong. How can a dead man have faith. It is not

Paul's faith in God, but **Gods faith** manifested through Paul which is completely opposite *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live **by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*** (Galatians 2:20).

The word of life

John also writes to the Christians and confirms that Jesus himself never ever manifested his own life - that is, the life he inherited from Adam. Jesus was *tempted in all points as we are*, proving that it would have been possible for him to do his own will rather than his father's will. John says that he actually touched Jesus' mortal flesh and *handled the word of life*. The only life that Jesus manifested was the eternal life and character of his father.

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for **the life** was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us* (1 John 1:1-2).

The rich young ruler

A really clear example of the two lives and the cost of dying to our own life is the rich young ruler, who wanted eternal life, but did not want to **die to self** in this life. When asked what he needed to do to obtain eternal life Jesus told him and he said that he had fulfilled the requirements. The young man then asked what else he lacked and Jesus said *if you want to be perfect...?* This is different than eternal life, it is the perfection that Jesus talked about at the end of

chapter 5 of Matthew which we looked at in book 3 of this series. Footnote 2 Jesus told him to sell what he had and give it to the poor and follow, not his own career, ambitions or securities, but to forsake all and follow Jesus and he would have treasures in heaven. He would change the life that was being manifested in his physical body, and would now glorify God in his mortal body rather than his own life and glory. He could not do it.

The cost for this young man was too great and so it is today with so many Christians. They have eternal life by faith, but they do not want to be perfected. There are not many Christians who are willing to die to self so that God can live his life in their bodies. But this is true discipleship - for me to die so that Christ can live through and in me.

What is the conclusion to this part of Jesus' instruction to take no thought for this life? Well, it certainly requires a change of thinking, a renewing of our thought patterns. Can I suggest that if you are serious in your pursuit of holiness then you begin practically and think less about what you want with and from your life and think about the life of Christ and what he wants to do with your life as summed up in the beatitudes?

Don't tease yourself

This means that you may have to stop teasing yourself with the things that you will never require or afford. Fashion and slimming magazines cause women to be covetous. Car and sports magazines can do the same for men.

I am not suggesting a legalistic approach I am only advocating thinking on the things that will build me more like Christ and not the things that will make me think more like 'the Jones's', and the things that will pamper to **my life** as opposed to **the life of Christ**.

These simple examples are just that - examples, and you will have to decide what it is in your life that pampers to your ego rather than the death of it. As a Christian you are serving your life - covetousness, or you are serving the life of Christ - contentment. One of these two lives, according to Jesus, is your master!

Footnote 1

Book 1. Will the real Christians Please stand up. Chapter 15 'All in the mind' Page 133 Published by Barratt Ministries Publications.
ISBN 0 9528222 1 0

Footnote 2

Book 3. Fulfilling the Law .Chapter 19 'Christian perfection' Page 125. Published by Barratt Ministries Publications.
ISBN 1 904592 14 7

Chapter 7

Eat, Drink and be Merry

I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, what you shall drink; or for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

Matthew 6:25-33

Christianity promises to make men free: it never promises to make them independent.

Walter Ralph Inge

We are now on to another area that Jesus told us not to be anxious about; food and clothes. He is saying that they must not be important to us. If they are, then we have become covetous and are in danger of losing the life of Christ. We are seeking the things that those without the life of Jesus are seeking.

Before I discuss these basic needs of mankind I would like to give another illustration in the bible that shows how God hates covetousness and how he sets a precedent of judgement when it first manifests. I will use three women in the bible to show this.

Eve the first woman

The first time that covetousness manifested was in Eve - the first woman. She saw a tree *that was to be desired* (Genesis 3:6). She wanted independence from the commands of God to choose her own morality - the knowledge of good or evil. God dealt with it immediately and banished Adam and Eve from the tree of life, because they had chosen the wrong tree and it was not in God's plan that anyone could eat of two trees at the same time.

God's wife

The second woman is the wife of God - Israel. God chose this nation and delivered them from Egypt. As soon as they entered the promised land and had taken the first city, Jericho, a man named Achan was covetous and although God had expressly forbidden it, he kept expensive clothes, gold and silver from the spoils.

God dealt with this immediately for it was the beginning of Israel's conquest of the promised land and he showed how much he hated covetousness. Achan and his

whole family were stoned and burned as a punishment. Achan's confession was this; *When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonian garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekel's weight, then I coveted them, and took them* (whole story in Joshua 7).

The bride of Christ

The third woman is the bride of Christ. The Church was birthed in Jerusalem, on the feast of Pentecost, and the life of Christ was manifested. They had all things in common and were of one mind and one heart. A married couple, Ananias and his wife Sapphira, manifested covetousness and held back part of the proceeds of a house sale when purporting to give it all and in so doing tried to deceive the Church and the Holy Ghost, and all because of the love of money. Peter said that they didn't have to give any of the proceeds to God, "so why try to deceive us and the Holy Ghost".

The judgement was swift and Peter pronounced the death penalty on them both; they dropped dead and were carried out and buried (whole story Acts 5:1-10).

Becoming our own god

The three illustrations show that when we are covetous the only way to satisfy that desire is to disobey God's laws, and to covet our own independence and, in reality, it makes us a law unto ourselves and we become our own god. Independence in our family, in work situations, in Church and with our personal life only comes at the price of rebellion to God's laws.

This is very serious and that is why Jesus said that

we can't serve two masters, and why he gives us these five basic rights of independence that need to be relinquished in order to have the life of Christ living through our mortal bodies.

I will now look at food and see how our eating habits, and how we value food reflects our spiritual state and in the next chapter I will discuss clothing and its implications. Food is what goes **into** our bodies whereas clothes are what we put **upon** our bodies.

Eat to live or live to eat

What is food for? It is to sustain life for we can not live without it. God intended us to eat to live as opposed to living to eat. It is surprising how food has become a status symbol in Western culture. Generally, as a person's income and social standing rise, so do the eating habits change. Cheap beer changes to wine and champagne, cod's roe changes to caviar, fish and chips from the "chippy" change to elegant restaurants and so on.

My point is not that any food is wrong of itself, but that the pride of life and the lust of the eyes can easily take away the simplicity of life and selfish covetousness can blind us to the life of Christ, and we become like the rich man who fared sumptuously - oblivious of a beggar sitting below his table gathering crumbs.

We are responsible

With our shrinking world there are millions of orphans and dying multitude, within a few hours plane ride of our laden tables, looking for crumbs and we will have to answer to Jesus at his judgement seat for *the deeds done in our body* (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Should Christians be vegetarians? Well, God did make a covenant with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and had only given them grain and fruit to eat (the animals were made for companionship before God made Eve). However, the answer is a simple one. Christians should not be vegetarians because of a Christian principle. Of course, if someone prefers food other than meat because of taste or for personal reasons then this does not apply.

The reason is that after the flood God made a new covenant with Noah and future generations. Most of the covenant is the same as that made with Adam and Eve; "Be fruitful and multiply", etc. but then he says that he has given the **flesh of all animals for food**, so long as we do not eat it with the blood.

Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you; even as the green herbs have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, you shall not eat (Genesis 9:3-4).

Vegetarianism is a part of Hinduism and is a part of the doctrine of reincarnation. I can not go into this subject as it is not in the remit for this book, but it is very easy to find evidence of this if you look at web sites on Vegetarianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or the Theosophical Society.

Organic and fat free

Vitamin supplements, organic foods, low fat diets are all now part of Western culture and can also become a 'status thing', and take us away from the truth that the biggest health hazard is not bad food but bad attitudes. Pressure of life, anger, hatred, bitterness, or an unforgiv-

ing attitude can all damage our physical bodies much more than the imperfect food we may eat.

I have observed that people who are overly worried about what food contains, who count the calories, or are paranoid about impurities in almost everything they eat are bordering on becoming hypochondriac and seem less healthy than other people who do not worry about what they eat.

A friend of my wife and I had the vitamin bible in a prominent place in his kitchen - and it was thicker than my King James bible. He and his wife had a saucer of pills (imported from USA at great cost) each day with their breakfast to supplement their food. The strange thing was that they always seemed to have colds and complaints and after many years of this lifestyle the husband suffered with M.E.

I am convinced that the over indulgence of vitamins and minerals broke down their natural immune systems and made them weaker and more susceptible to viruses.

Rubbish in ~ rubbish out

Jesus said that what goes into our mouth in the nature of food can be processed by our bodies and with a bowel movement pass away toxic waste. The sad thing is that our hearts do not have the capacity for bowel movements. The only way out for the toxins in our heart is our mouths and this is what defiles and poisons a Christian.

Hear, and understand: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man ... Do you not understand, that whatsoever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which

proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man (from Matthew 15 10-20).

An indulgent lifestyle in food may not seem so bad on face value but every lifestyle has its consequences, and 'ease in Zion' and self sufficiency have devastating effects in the long run. All sin starts in the heart and as covetousness is the root of all sin, then love of this world's goods and the status and attention to the flesh that it brings, can not bear the correct fruit.

I would like to take Sodom and Gomorrah as an example. We all know that sodomy (homosexuality), gets its name from the city that God destroyed with fire and brimstone. However, if we read the book of Ezekiel we find that the roots of the outward sin of Sodom were sins of the heart. Sexual immorality is only a consequence of an indulgent self centred and materialistic society. *Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom, **pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness** was in her and in her daughters, **neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy** (Ezekiel 16:49).*

As a contrast to this situation in Babylon let me look at the life of Daniel, for he is a good example of someone who lived in this world and yet was not part of it in the area of food. Daniel found himself in Babylon and assigned to be part of the hierarchy of Government at the highest level of a world empire. In this capacity he was allowed, and indeed encouraged, to eat and drink of the very best - the king's meat. Daniel refused his legitimate

rights and decided to live differently. He asked for only pulses to eat.

Kosher foods

I have heard preachers say that Daniel could not eat the king's meat because he was a Jew and could not be defiled by having non kosher food. This is not a sensible assumption, for Daniel in his high position could have asked for his food to be prepared any way that he wanted it prepared, and surely there is no such thing as kosher wine. No, it was the legitimate, indulgent lifestyle that he was refusing. His request was not for kosher meat, but for pulses - simple plain food. He lived a life of prayer and fasting, not enjoyment and feasting.

This lifestyle was instrumental in a revelation that God's judgement on Jerusalem was coming to an end and Daniel's prayer of intercession played its part in the restoration of God's people back into the promised land to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the temple. Who wants to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls when they can live like a king in Babylon? A celebrating Church living in a wicked nation will never bring revival in a million years. They can only prepare the way for the king of Babylon - the antichrist.

The ministry lifestyle

When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the gospel of the kingdom in Matthew chapter 10, he instructs them to live this simple lifestyle of unworried dependence on God and so they were to go without extra clothes and without financial security. The lifestyle of so many who are sent out in our modern society is in direct con-

trast to this instruction and is a scandal and an affront to the clear teaching of Jesus on these matters.

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat (Matthew 10:9-10).

My meat is to do his will

Jesus was so interested in a loose woman of Samaria that he missed his food, and while the disciples went to buy bread he led her to Salvation. When the disciples returned they desired that he would eat something, but Jesus said, *I have meat that you know not of*. The disciples as always were thinking about their bellies and imagined that Jesus must have eaten some food, but Jesus said a revealing thing to them, *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work"*.

He was saying that what satisfied him was not carnal food, but the joy of pleasing his father and doing his work. Of course Jesus ate to live and I am sure he enjoyed his food, and so should we, but his priorities and real satisfaction came from a spiritual source and not what pleased his flesh.

Let us enjoy our food and *eat our meat with gladness*, but let us remember that our body will soon die and it is only the house that we dwell in. Let us make sure that we are more concerned with the real values of life; the life of Christ manifest in our mortal bodies.

Chapter 8

Status, Image and Style

And why take thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

Matthew 6:28-33

We must now look at the question of clothes. It is an area that Jesus said that we should not worry or be anxious about, but what has clothing to do with our salvation? Well, it has nothing to do with salvation for we are righteous by grace through faith and not of works or clothing. But,

fashion has a lot to do with our holiness - our separation from the world, and it is another area where we can demonstrate our independence in this modern age.

Created naked

Adam and Eve were created to be naked and they had no use for clothes at all. Adam was told to dress the garden not himself. *And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it* (Genesis 2:15). The climate was completely different before the flood and so Adam and Eve didn't need clothes for warmth. Adam and Eve were the only living people and so they didn't need clothes for modesty either.

After Adam and Eve had eaten of the wrong tree they had the knowledge of good and evil and it was then that they knew they were naked. There were no other people on the earth to see their nakedness and they would not be ashamed of each other as man and wife so it was from God's presence that they were ashamed and needed a covering. They covered themselves with fig leaves and they were not wrong in this for God himself then made them clothes of skins. *Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them* (Genesis 3:21).

The clothes culture

Because of the sin of Adam and the destruction of the earth by flood we now need clothes for two things:

- 1) to cover our nakedness
- 2) to keep us warm.

This is what happens in poor countries and uncivilised cultures. In wealthy societies, because of the pride of life

and lust of the eyes, clothes have become a culture in themselves, and they are used to make a status statement and show our affluence.

When people gain wealth and positions in a society then the clothes they wear and the diversity they have usually reflect this fact. The label becomes more important than the covering or the heat value.

The fashion and slimming industry is a multi - billion pound machine that creates a demand and exploits the greed, lust and pride of our societies. Fashions change each season for no other reason than for business, and while so many people in the world are naked and hungry, it is hard for me to see how a person full of the love of God can be a part of this industry or a dedicated follower of fashion.

Love not the world

If we are not to be of this world then surely this is one area where a Christian can be different. Please do not think that I am an advocate of Christians wearing black, and all ladies having a bun in their hair. The opposite side of indulgence is legalism and I hate this as much as I hate the lasciviousness and decadence of the fashion and clothing industries.

Jesus is not talking against nice clothing and attractive appearance, he is talking about covetousness in the heart and is against the things of this world having a hold over us. Jesus said, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him* (1 John 2:15).

When a young teenager's fashion is the attire that a prostitute would wear only a few years ago I believe it is time that Christians should step back and begin to dress

their children differently. Most of woman's fashion is to cause lust in a man and of course men love to do this in the apparent safety of their hearts where no one can see. I know from the men's seminars that I run that Christian men have a very real problem in this area of lust. Adultery is always covetousness at its roots, for it starts with wrong desires, often fuelled by provocative attire.

The peacock syndrome

Jesus said that the body was not made for clothes, but to please God. God could have clothed Adam and Eve with all kinds of exotic wear and perfumed their bodies, but he didn't want man to be distracted from the fact that they were created in God's image.

Much of God's creation is clothed with far more beauty, colour and perfume than man, but they do not detract from the glory of God as a human being does when in pride they act as a peacock and steal God's glory. Clothes are another area where we can obtain glory for ourselves.

Solomon as a naked man would not look attractive, and men's body smells are certainly not appealing. Solomon wore expensive and rare garments and put expensive perfumes upon himself to be attractive and yet Jesus said that a lily in the field has a natural perfume, a beautiful colour and a far more delicate texture than man made clothes. *Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these* (Matthew 6:28-29).

Temples of the Holy Ghost

There is an argument that says that we are the temples

of the holy Ghost and therefore we should make ourselves beautiful for God. We should have a good shape and wear fashionable clothes to glorify God. It is true that the Holy Ghost dwells in our physical bodies and that we are now the temple of God, but the bible screams out at every reference and tells us that the temple should be **holy**, and holy means separate and different from the world.

As for beauty, then what Peter says should convince us that the beauty that God looks at is not the outward appearance, it is the beauty of heart - the beauty of holiness.

...while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (from 1 Peter 3:1-6).

Finding the balance

The bible says that a married woman, although betrothed to Christ, has the obligation to please her husband. I am sure that all men would agree with me that it pleases them more when their wife takes attention to her hair and attire than if she would walk about in curlers all day and in tatty clothes.

The same applies to a man. What woman is attracted to her husband when he allows himself to become smelly and untidy in his appearance.

Paul says, *There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married cares for the things of the world, how*

she may please her husband (1 Corinthians 7:34).

Of course there is a vast difference between being attractive and being provocative or seductive and if a man desires and expects his wife to dress as provocatively as the world then he needs to clean up his own heart. A man who enjoys seeing other men lust after his wife, to boost his own ego (that he has an attractive wife) is on dangerous ground.

We need a balance between legalism and allowing our God given personalities to shine through. Modesty does not mean wearing black, and femininity does not mean sexy or seductive. When I go to India I am always surprised how attractive a woman looks in a sari. They are very brightly coloured and certainly feminine and yet they never disclose the flesh or exact shape of the woman's body. Of course I am not saying that women in the West should dress in a sari. It is an example of clothing that does not provoke lust in a man.

Lifestyle proves our heart

The antidote to covetousness is what Jesus says a few verses later in Matthew 6:33. *But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* If we are seeking the same things as the world it is certain that we have turned our back on the true kingdom of God.

Our lifestyle only proves our heart, and we should ask ourselves the question; How important are clothes, image and fashion to me? If they are important to us then we need to think seriously about our lives and the kingdom in the light of Jesus' teaching.

Indulgence is the start of sin

To finish this part of the Sermon On The Mount it would be wise to consider how many sins are instigated because of

indulgence in clothes, food and drink. How many women are seduced by fast cars, expensive meals and exotic drinks, and how many men lust in their hearts because of provocative fashion and alcohol that loosen their morals and resolve?

Chapter 9

Tomorrow Never Comes

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

Matthew 6:34

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.

Corrie Ten Boom

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then you shall also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:4-5

The last area that Jesus tells us not to be anxious about is the future. Maybe this is the biggest challenge to any Christian living in this present age, because planning is part

of our make up and is a godly quality. God is the ultimate designer and planner, so to plan forward is not wrong. It is obvious that we can not plan for the past or the present, but can only plan for the future, and it is right that we should. Surely storing treasures in heaven is planning for our future?

It is the reason **why** we plan that Jesus is challenging. It is wrong if we plan because of the worry and the stress that this world's system puts upon us. The future is in God's hands and good people in the Old and New Testaments seemed to have the attitude; we will do this **if God wills**.

Two kingdoms - two futures

This part of the Sermon on the Mount is still under the paragraph heading of *no man can serve two masters* and so we will serve and seek one of two ways. We will seek treasures on earth and will have to plan for the future accordingly, with all the stress that it imposes on us, or we will seek and serve the future kingdom of heaven, and have a care free life, knowing that our *heavenly father cares for us*.

I've no idea how much the average person spends on insurance each year in the West but I do know that the money spent would save maybe millions of children's lives in the third world. Insurance is for rich people; that is, for people with something to insure. When I go to Africa and India the people only have enough food for the day and so the future is not a problem. They live from day to day.

Insurance in the West is advertised using fear as the incentive ...“This could happen to you”, and they show the silhouette of a man going to break into a house. Or they say, “If you have an accident and can't work any more, then

what will happen with your mortgage payments?” The fear of the uncertain future causes people to pay money for, as the insurance companies tell us, peace of mind. I am not speaking against insurance.

The future is Gods

If you are fearful you need it. If you live by faith in God as we are all supposed to do then you have peace of mind despite any circumstance that can come your way, and it would be foolish to pay for what you already have.

Why does Jesus say that we should not worry about tomorrow? Well one reason is that tomorrow never comes. We can only live in the present and when the next day arrives it will not be tomorrow, but today. This may seem simplistic thinking, but the principle is very strong, for while we are thinking about tomorrow we miss the present and are robbed of the enjoyment of living each minute as it comes.

Where are you living?

Most people that I meet are living in the past or the future and therefore not truly living each minute as it is. I have worked in a large office connected to a factory and so I have observed both classes of workers.

On a Monday morning most of the workers will be telling the exploits of the weekend they have just enjoyed. “Did you see Manchester United on Saturday? - Wow!” “Cor, I got paralytic on Friday night and they had to carry me home.” “We were in a great Disco all night Saturday”, and so on. They live for two days on the revelry or excitement of the past weekend.

On Wednesday they are already looking forward to the

end of the working week. “Roll on Friday, when we are on another pub crawl”, “Can’t wait for the concert on Saturday evening”, and so on. They are missing the joy of being alive each day and the privilege of God’s health and strength. They have been robbed of living for each minute.

Live for today

Many people get through the chores they don’t like by thinking about the future things they will do which will be enjoyable. Christians should enjoy everything that they do and do it to the glory of God. It is not good enough to look forward to the next big crusade meeting or Church function if you are not enjoying the relationship with God moment by moment

A real Christian has given God their lives; which means that they do not give God ten percent of their income and keep the rest. They do not give God time in the morning so that they can have the rest of the day for themselves. Every second of every day belongs to God. All their money and talent and resources belong to another and they are only stewards of 100% of their time, their talents and their possessions.

This is the only real Christianity and the only true freedom. Jesus said *do not worry about food, clothes, the future, or your life*. This is really living in Christ.

Leaving God out of it all

When we plan too much for the future we stop God planning and looking after us. I know that people will challenge this by saying we have a God given brain and God expects us to use it, but only those who have abandoned themselves and their future to God will know

the joy of letting God solve their problems and of him being a heavenly father to them.

It is interesting to imagine how Job in the Old Testament would have reacted in a modern society. When his servants came and told him of the disaster to his house and that his cattle had been stolen, I suppose he would have said to his wife, "Don’t worry darling, we are well insured with 'American Life', and anyway good will come of it. I suppose the house did need refurbishing. We will be able to claim a new one".

Job had no insurance

If Job had been insured God could not have used the devil in this way to test him. Job actually vindicated God’s statement that he loved God and hated evil. I can only believe that he would have insured himself against God. He could not have said that *God gives and God takes away* (Job 1:21). He would have to say, “The Devil takes and the devil’s system gives it back again”.

How can giving money to an insurance company be giving to God? I would have thought that the God you pay would look after you? The two choices are Yahweh, or Satan the god of this world. You must come to your own conclusions.

Don't be anxious

Jesus says that we should not be anxious about tomorrow because *the evil of the day is sufficient thereof*. In other words it will take all our efforts and concentration to live for God today with all its problems and temptations without worrying about tomorrow’s problems. Tomorrow will look after itself which means that it is actually outside our

control; for no one on this earth can guarantee that they will have life the next day. It is not in our own hand. Life and death belong to God alone.

King Solomon who said some very wise things before he was deceived, indulged so much in the fashions, pleasures of this world, and building for the future, that from being the wisest man on the planet he became the worlds biggest fool and he ended up in witchcraft.

Let me end this chapter of Matthew with a couple of king Solomon's quotations.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

*There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy well **in his labour**. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. (Ecclesiastes 2:24)*

Part 3

Wisdom From Above

Chapter 10

Don't Fear the Flame

Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing hear not, neither do they understand.

Matthew 13:13

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Job 28:28

Jesus has now finished with the two great themes of the Sermon on the Mount - hypocrisy and covetousness. The translators of the bible have started a new chapter and I am sure they were inspired to do so for there is a complete change of direction. Jesus now begins to give instructions and wisdom.

Chapter seven is the only part of the sermon on the mount to have proverbs and parables in it - *don't cast pearls before swine, don't give holy things to dogs*. Up to this point there has only been straight talk, and illustrations, but

now Jesus gives us wisdom that is hidden unless we have revelation. The second half of chapter 7 is the conclusion or challenge of the sermon and as with all challenges it demands choice and response from us.

For disciples only

So much of this part of the Sermon on the Mount is preached as a gospel message to non Christians because the church has not wanted to accept the challenge. But the whole of the sermon is to disciples - *when he was set his disciples came to him and he taught them*. We are now offered the choice to stay a follower or become a disciple; to live **our own life**; or to lose it and live **his life**.

To emphasise the importance of this decision Jesus presents the choice in four ways. He gives us a choice between two gates - strait or wide; leading to two roads - broad or narrow; with two destinations - destruction or life. He offers us two trees that we can eat from - good or bad; and he ends the whole sermon with a choice of two foundations for building - rock or sand.

Follower to disciple

In the nineteen seventies my father challenged his church members to be disciples of Jesus and at the age of thirty I took up that challenge to die to my life and embrace the life of Christ. I had already accepted Jesus into my life at six years of age.

It was in the front lounge of our old, three storey, Victorian house in Manchester that my eldest sister, Norma, asked if I would like to accept Jesus into my life. I said, "yes", and she prayed with me and from that time forward I was always God conscious, even though as a teenager and

young married man I found the pull of the pleasures of this world so enticing. God in his mercy kept me from many things that I desired, but if indulged in would have trapped me and had lasting detrimental consequences in my life. Even so God did allow me to pursue certain indulgences to show me myself and enable me to understand the grace of God. I was just a follower of the way; having Salvation, but living a life that was pleasing to self and pursuing my own ambitions and dictates.

All we need is gold

I made the conscious decision at the age of thirty to be a disciple and live the Sermon on the Mount, as opposed to just believing it, and my life began to change beyond all recognition. Of course self praise is no recommendation, but my father is still alive to testify to this change and my wife will also verify that before these changes she found me to be (in her own words) “one of the most worldly carnal Christians she had ever met” and can not believe the transformation that God in his mercy has performed in me.

I still have a long way to go before I can say with Paul, *I am dead and only Christ is alive in me*, but I believe that it is possible, even with me, and with every one who will pay the price.

A painful process

To change from being a follower to becoming a disciple, from carnality to godliness, is a painful process and I am not yet free of this pain. Pure gold only comes at the expense of the flame. Gold has to be bought, and the cost is the fire of truth in the inward parts.

The remedy for the lukewarm carnal church in Laodicea

was; *I counsel you to buy of me gold **tried in the fire**, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you might be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness doesn't appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see* (Revelation 3:18).

Can I appeal to all Christians. Please don't fear the flame - it only burns the rubbish.

Chapter 11

Judge Not

Judge not, that you are not judged. For with what judgement you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again ... You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then you shall see clearly to cast the speck out of your brother's eye.

from Matthew 7:1-5

How rarely we weigh our neighbour in the same balance in which we weigh ourselves.

Thomas a'Kempis

Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, whom both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

1 Corinthians 4:5

Jesus starts chapter 7 of Matthew with the warning that we must be very careful how we judge. Christians have often used this scripture about not judging as a reason to allow sin and faults in fellow Christians and insist that

because of the words; *judge not lest you be judged*, we are not allowed to judge anything, or anyone. This however, is not true at all.

The plank in our own eye

The statement must be read in its context and it is clear if we read the first five verses of this chapter that the emphasis that Jesus makes is that it is only wrong to judge if we have not considered that we may have the same, or bigger, fault and perhaps are guilty ourselves of doing the things we judge in another. In fact Jesus says that if we take the **plank** out of our own eye we will see clearly to help our brother take the speck out of his own eye. This emphasis suggests that we judge ourselves **before** we judge another.

However, there are some things that we are not allowed to judge and so I am going to look at what we must never judge under any circumstances and then I am going to look at the things we can and should judge.

Unless we understand the difference it is all too easy to judge the things that are forbidden and to neglect the things that we are instructed to judge.

Forbidden territory

There is one area that we, as Christians, are never allowed to judge and that is another person's heart, for God alone knows the heart of man (see 2 Chronicles 6:30 and Jeremiah 17:9). This means that because I do not know what a man's motives and desires are I must leave all the judging of men's hearts to God alone.

I am allowed to judge the actions of my fellow man and indeed I should do. Murder, adultery, or lies, are all outward actions and I have the word of God to tell me what

is a correct action and what is a wrong action. I will cover this fully when I look at what we are instructed to judge in the following chapters, but let us first look carefully at the whole area of judgement.

Judgement has two distinct processes. Our normal court of law is a good example of this. The first process is to assess. A man accused of murder has to be assessed - judged by the jury to determine whether he is guilty or innocent. After this assessment, if he is proved innocent he goes free, and the judgement has finished. If on the other hand he is assessed to be guilty then the second process comes into play and at a later date the judge will pass a sentence. In other words he will judge - assess his punishment, either lenient or severe. Only then will he begin the sentence.

The man has already been judged as guilty whether he has a lenient or a severe sentence. The two processes, although related, are nevertheless separate in their application and administration.

Satan is still free

Another example is that of our adversary Satan, who has been judged by Jesus on the cross. The bible says that Jesus exposed the principalities and powers of darkness.

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:15). Satan was judged guilty of crucifying God in the flesh - Jesus Christ.

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Satan has not at this time started his punishment. Satan is still free and he is still the *god of this world*. His sentence,

punishment, starts when God, the judge, casts him into the lake of fire (see Revelation 20:10). This has not happened yet and is a good illustration of the two separate processes of judgement.

Another warning from Jesus

Jesus brings another warning about the two processes of judgement in verse two when he says; *For with what judgement you judge, you shall be judged*. It is a divine law that how we judge, assess people, then God will judge us in the same manner. He then adds another phrase that is applicable to how we administer the sentence; *and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again*. The compassion or vindictiveness that we mete out the punishment will determine the way that Jesus will administer our punishment when we stand before the judgement seat of Christ *to account for the deeds done in our flesh*, that is, to be assessed for rewards or punishment (see 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Luke 12:47-48).

Judge yourself first

We must always judge a person's sin **after** we have judged ourselves in the light of Matthew five and make sure we are not committing the same sin in our hearts. We should always mete out the punishment in love and with compassion.

I use this twofold process of judgement as a guide for discipline with my own children. I am always judging their behaviour and not their hearts. I do not even know the heart of my own children, but I must judge and punish their actions if I am to be a godly father. It is a very difficult thing to judge a person's outward sin without trying to assess his

motives, but we must never fall into the trap of thinking that we can do it, in fact to assess someone's motive is to play at being God and is a very, very dangerous practice indeed.

Chapter 12

Why Not Judge?

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

Proverbs 20:9

A man's heart devises his way: but the LORD directs his steps.

Proverbs 16:9

I now want to bring out four reasons from the scriptures to show that we can not judge a person's heart.

1. We reveal out of our own hearts

You are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges: for where you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge do the same things (Romans 2:1).

On face value we would have to contradict the above statement from Romans, for surely this does not always apply to us and therefore can not be accepted as a rule. Surely I don't always do the very same things that I accuse others of doing? The problem is that Paul's statement is very true because we can only judge out of our own experience and what the world has portrayed to us. To

judge a person we have to put ourselves in their shoes and think why they would do it. This can only be based on the desires and motives of our own heart. In actual fact **when we judge another we are exposing our own secret heart.**

Jesus never judges the outward, he always judges the heart for he doesn't look at **what** we do, he discerns **why** we do it. The problem is that we are not God and we are not able to see the motives of a person's heart, so we can only judge the person's sin, that is, what he does outwardly, and never his motives. To judge a person's heart is God's domain and not ours.

I must qualify this reasoning and say that if God reveals the secrets of a man's heart to us then we are not using our own judgement and we are only speaking as an agent of God. I will give biblical examples of this in the next chapter.

Unless by supernatural means, God reveals someone's heart we must be very careful that our own deceitful assessment doesn't come into play and we use God as an excuse to mete out our own prejudices or agendas. This is very dangerous and not taken seriously enough by Christians.

2. We will be judging another man's servant

Who are you that judges another man's servant? To his own master he will stand or fall. Yes, he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand ...

But why do you judge your brother, or why do you set your brother as nothing, for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ? ...

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more:

but judge this rather, that no man puts a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way (from Romans 14:4,13).

Another reason that we must not judge our brother's motives is that we did not save our brother. We did not die on the cross for our fellow Christians. No one has been baptised in our name. They have not dedicated their lives to us, and so we have no control over our brother.

Our brother is the servant of Christ and not our servant and it is wrong to judge another man's servant. In fact, a minister becomes the servant of all and is supposed to wash his member's feet as Christ did with his disciples (see John 13:1-17).

Discipline your own children

A good illustration is in family life. If my children behave badly then as their parent I am allowed, and indeed obligated, to discipline them. However, if the children of my neighbour are behaving badly, I have no right to discipline them. I must take the problem to their parents for them to mete out discipline. So it is with us, we must leave the judging of the heart to God as the heavenly father of us all.

To judge people is often a way to control them and the Church has often failed in this respect. The world's system is governed by this ungodly practice of controlling people. Jesus came to set us free. I am not talking about authority which is a good thing and absolutely necessary and taught in scripture, I am talking about the abuse of authority to manipulate people for the purpose of building ones own dreams and further ones own ambitions and plans however good those plans may be. We must allow people

to follow God's leading. We can not say that we have a personal relationship with God if it is via a committee or organisation. The devil's system is always to control the masses. God's way is a personal walk with each individual. For this reason every person will have to answer to God and not to men. We will all have to stand before Christ at his judgement seat to give a personal account of our deeds and motive, and those in authority over us will be standing next to us to give their own personal account.

Let us leave the judging of the motives to Christ when he returns and, as Paul says in the heading scripture, let us judge ourselves in the meantime that we do not stumble one of our our brothers.

3. Appearances are not always the truth

Because we can not read a man's heart we have to rely on appearances - evidence, seen by ourselves or by reliable witnesses. The problem here is that evidence is not always the truth and as we know, from our own judicial system (probably the best in the world), there are mistakes and travesties of justice, false evidence and perjury.

Evidence not truth

When I worked in the motor trade in the nineteen sixties, before the days of MOT's and before the "Merchantable Sale of Goods Act" came into being, the motor trade was a law unto itself. We would often end up in a law court to settle differences between buyer and seller. One incident remains with me to this day.

The owner of the business that I managed was not a Christian and had no scruples at all concerning telling lies

to defend himself or to protect his wealth. On the occasions he asked me to attend court with him I said that I had one proviso and that was that I would only tell the truth. This was often a problem to him which usually meant I did not accompany him. But on one particular occasion he really needed my evidence. I believed that the man accusing us of misconduct was taking advantage of us and when the owner pleaded with me to attend the court I said the same as usual, "Yes, but I will only tell the truth".

Telling the truth

He really did need my evidence, because he surprised me and said, "OK we'll do it your way, we will **both** tell the truth". Off we went to court and we told the truth. We lost the case and the owner had to pay compensation. That was the last time I went with him to court

There is a sequel to this incident that surprised me and taught me a principle that I have never forgotten. A month later my boss, the owner of the car firm, and a Mason, was at a Masonic Lodge garden party and he found himself sitting next to the judge who had tried our case only the previous month. The judge recognised him and said. "Weren't you before me a few weeks ago?"

An honest judge

My boss said that he was and that we had lost the case. He also told the judge that we had told the truth and still lost the case. The judge then surprised him by saying, "That is where you went wrong. Next time you appear in court bring me evidence. I do not know the truth. I can only judge according to the evidence brought before me". Prior to that day I had never realised that there was a difference between

evidence and truth. It has changed my perspective on how I judge people.

Is this just the Masonic judge's philosophy I am presenting? On the contrary, it is all throughout the bible. Let me bring two examples from scripture to prove this important point, that evidence and truth can be completely opposite.

A. Joseph and his attempted rape

The story in Genesis chapter 39 is well known. Potiphar had put Joseph over all his affairs and trusted him implicitly. Potiphar's wife tried in vain to seduce Joseph many times but he had always refused her advances.

One day, when her husband was away, she desperately tried again, without success, as Joseph fled from her leaving his coat behind. She presented the coat to her husband as evidence that Joseph had attempted to rape her.

It is obvious that Potiphar trusted Joseph implicitly or he would not have left him to handle all his finances and his whole organisation. If Potiphar's wife had only told him that Joseph had tried to molest her I am sure that he would have dismissed it as her imagination, and that maybe she was exaggerating things in her mind. But when she presented Potiphar with material evidence, Joseph was immediately thrown into prison. **Her evidence had convicted Joseph**, but the truth was the very opposite of what the evidence seemed to say.

B. The Gibeonites

This story is in Joshua 9:3-16. God had told Israel to

destroy all the inhabitants in the land of Canaan and they had started their campaign by destroying the cities of Jericho and Ai.

The inhabitants of Gibeon had feared that Israel would do the same to them and their city so they used deception to save themselves. They sent men to Joshua with mouldy bread, worn out sandals and torn and dusty clothes.

They told him that they were from a city in a far country and that when they had set out their bread was fresh, and their sandals and cloths new. They wanted vows from Joshua that Israel would not destroy them. **Joshua looked at the obvious evidence** and, without consulting God, then decided that they were indeed from a far country and judged that it was safe to make a covenant with them.

The truth was too late

When Joshua found out later that they had lied to him, it was too late because he had made a vow before God and he could not break his vow. He had compromised and made them servants to Israel and so the Gibeonites saved their lives as they had deceitfully intended.

Here again the evidence was compelling but it was the very opposite from the truth. These two examples should be enough to frighten us from ever judging solely on evidence and without consulting God. Let me finish this principle with the words of Jesus.

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment (John 7:24).

4. We are not allowed to judge the flesh

For the love of Christ constrains us because we judge,

that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

*Wherefore henceforth know **we no man after the flesh**: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).

Judging after appearance

The above scripture which states that *all things pass away and all things become new* is usually quoted out of context. From the above verses we can see that the context is actually about judging. Paul says that we know no man after the flesh. The flesh is our old Adamic nature and Paul says that even though the Apostles knew Jesus in the flesh, they could not judge him after the flesh.

This is true for us today. Because our doctrine tells us that Jesus did not sin, which is of course true, we do not look for faults in his life as portrayed in the bible. However, if we only look at the actions of Jesus we could find plenty of things to criticise him for if we desire to do so; in other words if we only judged Jesus on appearance - If we look at the things he did and ignore his motives.

Honour those in authority

Surely it is discourteous when Jesus tells his disciples that King Herod is a fox? *And he said unto them, Go and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected (Luke*

13:32).

Paul says we must honour those in authority. *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Timothy 2:1).*

Was Jesus correct when he made a whip and drove the traders out of the temple and then overturned all the tables scattering the merchandise? Even if the merchants were wrong surely Jesus should have reasoned with them first and given them a chance to pack up their wares. Maybe he should have brought the case to the Sanhedrin. Surely he shouldn't have taken the law into his own hands. What would happen if we all did that?

And when 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; John 2:15.

I can not imagine anyone, of any Christian denomination, allowing that I was correct if I went into a Church youth group and overthrew the pinball machines and smashed up the table tennis tables and threw all the young people out of the building. If the church was wrong to allow these games on the premises, no one would condone the manner in which I protested.

Our brother is a new creature

If we did not know that Jesus was sinless we could look at many more instances where we would be able to make a case against him just by looking at outward appearances.

If we are satisfied that a person is born of God, then we can no longer judge him after the old nature, because

he is a new creature. *Old things have passed away and all things have become new.* He is now righteous in God's sight. We **can** judge the man's sin - and he may need to be punished - but we can never judge the man himself; that is - his motives, his heart. This scripture in Corinthians, that we are looking at, is not telling us how we must view ourselves. This scripture is telling us how we must view our brother in the context of judging.

To conclude this chapter, let us remember that to judge an outward sin is always correct for we have the word of God to tell us plainly what is right and what is wrong. But the motive and reasons for the sin are for God to judge and we must leave that part to him.

Chapter 13

Things We Must Judge

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.

1 Corinthians 14:29

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

1 Corinthians 11:31-32

I speak as to wise men; judge what I say.

1 Corinthians 10:15

We must now set the balance from the last chapter, where we saw that we could not judge a person's heart but only his outward sin, and look at the things that we are instructed to judge. To judge is to assess, and the bible tells us that there are many things that as Christians we have to assess. To neglect to do this is as much a sin as to judge the things we are forbidden to judge. I am now going to look at six

areas that we are told to judge and I believe it will cover all the areas of our Christian walk with God and our fellow believers.

For each example we will see that it is not enough to judge between sin and innocence, but that the second part of justice needs to be administered if the accused is guilty - the punishment or discipline that is appropriate to the crime.

1. Sexual Immorality in the Church

*It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. **For I, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has done this deed** (1 Corinthians 5:1-3).*

In the above passage Paul is surprised and disappointed that there is sexual sin in the Church and that it has not been judged in its two stages. Paul reasons with them that even non Christians know that this sexual act is wrong, but he does not leave it at the stage of assessing what is sin and what is permissible, he goes on to administer the punishment, or discipline, that justice requires.

Like a cancer

The discipline he suggests is very strong indeed for he says that they should hand the offending person's body over to Satan that their spirit may be saved when Jesus judges his Church at his second coming. He explains why his punishment is severe, and it is because sin, like a cancer,

will spread throughout the whole body if not destroyed. *Your glorying is not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* (1 Corinthians 5:6)

Pride is the greater sin

I am sure that in every church there is sexual immorality of one kind or another hidden below the surface, but Paul was not talking about a witch hunt. He was talking about something that was common knowledge and had become acceptable to the members. This was the greater sin - that of pride and complacency among the leadership. *And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you* (verse 2). Notice that he never judges the person's motives, he is judging the outward sin and then passing the sentence or remedy that is required.

2. Disputes between Christians

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Don't you know that the saints shall judge the world? If the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Don't you know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

If then you have judgements of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But a brother goes to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another.

Why don't you rather take wrong? Why don't you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? No, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

Paul is quite specific here, for he says that in a dispute between two Christians, then we should never take the case to the law courts of the world. The Church has to intervene and judge the dispute. It has to put its own house in order before asking the world to repent of sin. He almost mocks them and says that even the weakest member of the Church should have the mind of Christ to be able to discern true judgement.

The extra mile

It is important to say that Paul also judges them in another respect and reprimands the church for having the dispute in the first place; what about turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, giving them our cloak also. He says that maybe they should suffer the wrong and hand the case to God instead of wanting their 'pound of flesh' or demanding their rights.

3. Hypocrisy

Jesus always had compassion on weak people and on sinners outside the kingdom of God. He was gentle, kind and showed mercy to them. However, whenever he came up against pride, hypocrisy, self righteousness, legalism and covetousness in God's people he was scathing and not only exposed them with his judgements, but passed sentence and cursed them. I have a saying which, although amusing, is nevertheless absolutely true ... "Jesus came to comfort the distressed and to distress the comfortable". There are many

examples of this in the gospels, but let me take you through a few verses from Luke 11:37- end.

This example proves how much Jesus hated and needed to judge and expose hypocrisy, for it was actually said in the house of a Pharisee. Jesus had been invited to his house for a meal and Jesus spoke these hard words at this very man's meal table. Jesus also judged the blindness, pride and legalism as this is all part of the same spiritual sin in God's people.

Jesus says for each category, *woe unto you*. Woe is just an old word for grief, and when Isaiah said "woe is me" he was saying that he was grief stricken. However, when someone says it to another as Jesus did "Woe **unto you**", it is a form of curse, a prophecy that they will suffer calamity and grief.

Hidden wickedness

A certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

And the Lord said unto him, You Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

You fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as you have and, behold, all things are clean unto you (verse 37-41).

Blindness

But woe unto you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgement and the

love of God: these you should have done, and not left the other undone (verse 42).

Pride

Woe unto you, Pharisees! For you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not even aware of them (verse 43-44).

Legalism

Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, saying all this reproaches us also.

And he said, Woe unto you also you lawyers! For you lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

Woe unto you! For you build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly you bear witness that you allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and you build their sepulchres.

Woe unto you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge: you don't enter in yourselves, and those that were entering in you hindered (verse 45-52).

Pride in God's people

In understanding why Jesus apparently judged very harshly and passed sentence on these people we need to realise that this spirit he is judging in the Pharisees was the very same spirit that crucified Jesus Christ.

God's people who had become proud self-righteous and legalistic said; *We have a law and by our law he ought to die (John 19:7)*. How blind can God's people get when

they don't even recognise God when he comes in the flesh.

4. Prophecy and Teaching

To prophecy in the bible sense is to speak under divine inspiration. This means that all teaching should be under this heading of prophecy, for a teacher is not allowed to speak his own philosophy or that of the world, it must be divine revelation. Speaking to the Corinthian Church Paul asked them to judge what he was saying. *I speak as to wise men; judge what I say (1 Corinthians 10:15)*.

He was not afraid to be judged and a man of God who is afraid of judgement from his hearers is an arrogant man who should never have entered the ministry.

No one is infalable

Because of the fact that it is possible for a supposed teacher of the word of God to teach things that are not revelation from God or inspired by the Holy Ghost then it will make it obvious that, as Christians, we should judge everything that is said "in the name of the Lord".

On the other hand Paul often let us know when he was giving his own opinion rather than by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

But to the rest I speak, not the Lord: If any brother has a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away (1 Corinthians 7:12).

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgement, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful (1 Corinthians 7:25).

Would to God that teachers would do the same these days and spare those of God's people, who often have no

discernment themselves, the manipulation that so often cripples the body of Christ.

With prophecy we often think of the prophets of old who **foretold** the future and of course this also needs to be judged. When, in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, Paul is instructing the Church how to operate the nine supernatural gifts of the spirit he says of prophecy and interpretation of tongues, that when one person operates these gifts then those other persons present should judge them. Remember that we are to judge the gift and not the man's heart.

What I will now state may surprise some readers, but I believe that the gift has no relationship to the one who speaks it. Unfortunately, many people judge the man by his gift and this is not only very dangerous, but contrary to scripture. The bible says that we know a man of God not by his gifts, but by his fruit - the character of Christ in him (Matthew 7:20).

We will look more at this subject in the next book when we come to the part where Jesus tells us how to discern false prophets.

An unholy ass

Balaam's ass prophesied to the prophet and yet the ass was not holy! King Cyrus of Persia, a despot, spoke an inspired word from the Almighty God and sent God's people back to build Jerusalem. They were the true words of Almighty God and yet he remained a despot until he died. God can make the stones to speak out and prophecy, or next door's cat if he wants to; the word is God's, but the vehicle to bring it may not be. Arthur Burt says that if the postman brings a letter to you and he is inebriated it has no bearing on the contents of the letter. He is only the instrument to

deliver the message.

When a man speaks we are assessing whether God is using him at the time or not. We are not judging the messenger, only the message.

We are however, allowed to judge the messenger **but we have a different criteria** for our judgement. We must judge his character using the fruit of the spirit, rather than the gifts of the spirit, as our reference.

5. False prophets

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **You shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

Even so every good tree produces good fruit; but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

*Wherefore **by their fruits you shall know them*** (Matthew 7:15-20).

I overlapped in the last category about needing to judge false prophets and the fact that we are judging the fruit and not the gift. The whole of 2 Peter 2 is given to the exposing of false prophets, and the book of Jude does the same. I am amazed that there is so little teaching in churches from these long specific passages.

Judging the false prophets

The next book in this series will cover these scriptures in depth but it is enough for me to state here that Peter and

Jude in their letters to the churches give us three areas to judge character.

a. The way of Cain.

b. The greedy way of Balaam.

c. The rebellion of Core.

At this point in the series it is enough to know that we are instructed to judge all men of God in the light of the above three areas.

6. Ourselves

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11:31-32).

This last one is perhaps the most important, and most neglected, of all the judgements that Christians are instructed to make; that of judging ourselves. We have now come a full cycle, for Jesus started his statements with the instruction to take the plank out of our own eyes before we could help our brother to see correctly.

Although the above passage from Corinthians is teaching about the breaking of bread the two verses about judging ourselves is perfect for understanding the process of self judgement.

Three stages of judgement

There are three stages in self judgement

a. We examine and judge any errors that we find in ourselves. Paul says that if we do this then another will not judge us, meaning God. He does not need to judge us if we respond to his conviction and judge ourselves.

b. If we fail to do this then God will judge - assess us,

and if we are in error he will pass sentence - chastise us.

c. If we do not allow God to do this second stage then he has no other option than to leave us to our own devices and we are then in danger of being judged when he comes again to judge his church who come before his own judgement seat. Can I suggest that you use this wise guideline for dealing with your own children or, if you are a leader or boss, with your own workers.

Judging ourselves

Let me take you through this process as if I am a father with my own child. All children at some stage of growing up are tempted to take things that do not belong to them. Let us imagine that my son sees a packet of sweets on the table and hides them under his pillow to eat at night when no one will see him. Let us then suppose that he has a pang of conscience and in the morning comes and confesses that he took them saying that he is sorry.

Praise not punishment

I personally would shake his hand and say, "Well done my son, you have judged yourself and I have no need to punish you. If I had found out that you had taken the sweets before you had confessed to me then I, as a good father, would have been obligated to punish you".

Why would I punish a child I love? Simply because of the fact that I love him. If I let him get away with stealing some sweets now, then maybe the next time it will be money he steals and I have allowed him to start on the slippery road of becoming a criminal. In five year's time I may be in a law court to hear the Judge say to my son, "You will go down for seven years in her majesty's prison to start your sentence as a thief".

Save God the problem

I would rather judge my son whom I love than have another man, who has no feelings for my son, judge him. So it is with God. If only his children would judge themselves they would save so much chastisement from their loving father.

Be sure God will do it because he does not want us to be condemned with the world. Read carefully and slowly the following words from Hebrews where God says to his own children,

*You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as children, **My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father doesn't chasten? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you are bastards, and not sons** (Hebrews 12:5-8).*

A good father uses discipline

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Hebrews 12:9-11).

The conclusion to the whole of the last three chapters

can be summarised in two simple statements:

- a. Be very careful not to judge your brother's motives, only judge his sins - faults.
- b. Be very diligent and unafraid to judge the things that we are instructed to judge.

There is one last area that I have not covered up to this point. Sometimes God, through the supernatural gifts of the spirit, can give someone revelation and discernment to judge a person's heart and secret motives or hidden agendas, and I will look at this more closely in the next chapter.

Footnote 1

See also Matthew chapter 23 for a long list of judgements against the Scribes and Pharisees

Spiritual Judgement

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another different kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these work through the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me.

John 5:30

In this present age when the gifts of the spirit are practised in many of our evangelical Churches, I believe the most neglected of these gifts and the one that needs 'stirring up' is the discernment of spirits. How many church splits would have been avoided if this gift was present at the beginning of the trouble? How many Churches could have

avoided going off the rails with strange doctrines of men, or even of devils, if someone in the body had supernatural discernment?

I am not talking here about farsightedness, or worldly wisdom. I am talking about revelation that could not possibly come except through the Holy Ghost. There is far too much psychiatry and psychology in the Church - much of which borders on the new age - and far too little of the spiritual discernment that comes, not with knowledge and education, but by revelation of the Holy Ghost.

This discernment was present in the early Church and also in the ministry of Jesus. It is also always evident when a new move of God comes to a nation.

Jesus our example

In John's gospel Jesus gives us a clue as to why his own discernment or judgement was always true. It is very simple. It was not his own judgement. Jesus never judged anyone or anything. *I can do nothing of myself: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me* (John 5:30).

He says, because he did not seek his own will, but the will of his father, his own judgement was just. This is the great secret to spiritual discernment, for when we seek our own will then our judgement is biased and we will never receive the revelation from the Holy Ghost. We will always reveal our own revelation - that is, our own biased will. When we realise that we are nothing and therefore can do nothing of ourselves that will please God, then he will do what we can not do. God delights to do this for one reason only; *to have the glory for himself and not to share it with*

flesh.

The best way for me to explain this spiritual discernment is to give some examples from the bible and see how people judged the hearts of men with information that they could never have possessed with their natural minds and wisdom.

Ananias and Sapphira

*But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, **Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?** While it remained, was it not your own, and after it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:1-4).*

This incident happened at the very beginning of the early Church growth explosion and is well known, showing perfectly that very necessary gift in operation. Today, there are many, many things in the body of Christ that need revealing or exposing to keep Christ's Church pure.

Peter had no way of knowing that this couple had made a secret agreement to hold back part of the money and then to lie about it. Not only was Peter able to judge (assess that they had lied) but was able, by divine revelation, to be bold and to judge (pass sentence on) the situation, and this man Ananias. His judgement was actually the death sentence. *And Ananias hearing these words **fell down, and gave up the ghost:** and great fear came on all those that heard these things (verse 5).*

Peter then judged the wife of Ananias and she also died

on the spot and they carried them both out and buried them. God is often very ruthless in his dealings with his people when they are in the early stages of revival. God dealt this way with Achan in the book of Joshua when God's people were at the beginning of taking the promised land. Here, in this early revival of the Church of the New Testament, God gave his servant Peter divine revelation to judge the situation.

Simon the Sorcerer

But there was a certain man, called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: and to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done ... and when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power; that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

But Peter said unto him, your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money (from Acts 8:9-20).

Here we have another example of judgement by divine revelation and of being able to judge a man's heart. Peter knew that it was wrong to offer money to receive power from God so he didn't need a revelation to judge Simon's actions, but he did not know the root of the problem, because the roots of all sin is in the heart and that is God's domain. We are not allowed to judge it.

Our heart is the problem

However, the Holy Ghost revealed the condition of Simon's heart and Peter was able to put his finger on the root of the problem. ***Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven. For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*** How would Peter know that bitterness in the heart was the root of the problem?

Peter judged with divine revelation, the next stage of judgement but the sentence was never executed for Simon repented. *Then answered Simon, and said, Pray to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me* (verse 24).

A devil possessed girl

*... as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. **But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour*** (Acts 16:16-18).

Here is another incident where the apostle Paul needed divine knowledge to be able to understand and judge the situation. As he was on his way to prayer, this girl followed him and advertised the fact that he was a man of God with a message. Read carefully what this woman said. *These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.*

I would like this to be said about me and my ministry. There is nothing at all that we could judge to be wrong with her words. In fact we would have to say that they were truthful and in saying those words she probably made many people listen to Paul's preaching.

God's divine timing

What was seriously wrong was her heart. She was possessed of an evil spirit. Why didn't Paul deal with the spirit at the beginning, for the scripture says that she did this ***many days?*** Perhaps Paul, using his natural discernment was pleased that she pointed men to hear his preaching and only when God supernaturally revealed that the root was satanic was he able to discern and judge the spirit in her.

Perhaps God revealed the root from the beginning and God did not allow him to deal with it until the time appointed. I don't know and I suspect you don't either, but we do have the fact, that by spiritual discernment he was able to deliver this possessed girl from the clutches of Satan into the arms of Jesus.

Spiritual discernment

Many Christians 'discern' that someone is possessed just because of some outward manifestation, or unusual behaviour, but this can often be wrongly interpreted. It could be a chemical imbalance in the brain, etc. What we need is the spiritual discernment that comes from the Holy Ghost that will bypass our natural, carnal minds and reveal the secrets of men's hearts so that we are executing God's judgements and not our own.

This concludes the studies on judging. We must remember that we are not allowed to judge a man's heart,

but we **are** instructed to judge his sins and faults. We also must pray for the supernatural gift, 'discerning of spirits', so that God through us can judge the heart of people that would come and deceive the body of Christ.

Chapter 15

Holy Things

Do not give that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Matthew 7:6

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Up to this point in the sermon on the Mount Jesus has given many illustrations, but this is the first time that he has spoken a proverb, some word of wisdom that makes sense in the natural, but needs interpretation for a spiritual application. *Don't give holy things to dogs* could be a direct quotation from the book of proverbs.

There are actually two distinct statements, one about holy things and one about pearls. They are not different ways of saying the same thing, but completely different subjects. I want to show that the first statement; *Don't give*

holy things to the dogs, is about natural things and the second statement; *Don't cast your pearls before swine*, is about spiritual things and each statement has a completely different application.

Holiness is separation

I will now consider the first statement. If I can establish what things are holy and then what 'the dogs' means from scripture the application should be obvious.

What is a holy thing? Holiness means separation, different, set apart. In Christian terms it means set apart **for God's exclusive use** for if something is used for God and also for men then by definition it could not be holy.

When we dedicate anything to God, this is what we are doing, we are setting it apart for God's exclusive use.

Holy Things Under The Old Covenant

In the light of this I will first consider what things were considered holy under the old covenant for God's people. I believe there were three areas:

1. **Physical objects**
2. **Times and seasons**
3. **People**

I will now bring scriptures to support my claim for these three areas.

1. Physical objects including buildings

The vessels that Moses made for the tabernacle in the wilderness were made out of things such as gold, wood or cloth. A lump of gold could have made a vessel for the

temple or an ornament for a woman. It was just gold, but as soon as Moses anointed and dedicated these things for God's exclusive use, then they were counted holy and could now be defiled or desecrated if they were used for any other purpose outside of God's use.

*And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, **and sanctified them.***

*And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, **to sanctify them*** (Leviticus 8:10-11).

For God's use only

The same happened with the temple that Solomon built. The building and all the individual objects in it were separated for God's use.

So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD.

*And Solomon brought in the things **which David his father had dedicated**; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD (1 Kings 7:51).*

And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep.

*So the king and all the children of Israel **dedicated the house of the LORD*** (1 Kings 8:63).

2. Times and seasons

Times and seasons are not to do with matter, but nevertheless they are still to do with the natural order of God's supernatural creation. There were many days and periods of time that God told Israel to separate for his

use and to make them special days or Holy days, but the obvious one for us to look at is the Sabbath.

One day in seven is God's

One day in seven was to be separated for God's use and the Children of Israel were not allowed to do their own work on that day. It was to be God's day. It was to be different from all the other six days of the week, but only because they made it so by separating it for God and not because it had any different physical qualities or attributes.

A holy place, or object, has no power of itself, it is all to do with our attitude and how we value them in our mind. When we believe the object itself has a power, or force, it is a form of witchcraft.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).

You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

*Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, **holy to the LORD**: whosoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death* (Exodus 31:14-15).

Although our subject is not the Sabbath it is worth noting two things:

a. Moses law didn't institute the Sabbath. He said, Remember the Sabbath day, keep it holy.

The above verse from the Ten Commandments confirms to us that the law of Moses told the Children of Israel that they were not to neglect what had already been established

by God at creation.

b. The penalty for breaking it was death

God obviously viewed sabbath breaking as seriously as he viewed murder and adultery for the punishment was the same.

3. People - collectively and individually

God wanted the whole nation of Israel to be separated unto him, as a holy and peculiar nation.

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

*and you shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation*** (Exodus 19:5-6).

*Speak unto **all the congregation of the children of Israel**, and say unto them, You shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy* (Leviticus 19:2).

Sad but true

It is a very sad fact that God's chosen people failed to keep themselves holy (separated) and they married foreign wives and adopted their strange god's. God then called the tribe of Levi, and then set aside Aaron and his sons to be his holy priesthood. They had special rules that were exclusive to the priesthood. These rules were to make them more separate (holy) than the rest of God's children.

And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, do not drink wine nor strong drink, you, or your sons with you when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die:

it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: and that you should put a difference between holy and unholy and between clean and unclean (Leviticus 10:8-10).

Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate

themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the LORD (Leviticus 22:2).

... and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever (1 Chronicles 23:13).

Holy Things Under The New Covenant

I do not think that any Christian would disagree with what was holy under the old covenant, but what are we to consider holy at this present time and under grace?

Let me start in reverse order and see what the new testament says about these three areas; people, times and goods/buildings.

1. People

It is very easy for me to prove that people are still expected to be holy, for Peter quotes to the Church, in his second letter, the exact same words that Moses had spoken to the children of Israel.

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a **holy nation**, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10). Also in his first letter Peter says;

*But as he which has called you is holy, **so you be holy** in all manner of conversation, because it is written, You be holy; for I am holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).*

Therefore, there should not be a debate about the fact

that Christians today are expected by God to live Holy lives and to be different, peculiar, and separated from everything else in this world.

2. Days and Seasons

Holy days and seasons are much more controversial. The established Church made its own calendar of Holy days to 'Christianise' the pagan calendar, but sadly it has no foundation in the bible.

Holidays are holy days

The very word holiday comes from these 'holy days'. This new calendar has replaced all the days that God said in the Old Testament should be holy, with a whole new set of dates: Easter instead of Passover; Whit Sunday instead of First fruits; Sunday the first day of the week instead of the Sabbath (Saturday) the seventh day of the week; Ash Wednesday; Good Friday, and so on.

Not only have they changed the names but also the dates. From the bible it is very clear that Jesus died at the feast of Passover and no bible student would dispute this fact. However, the Church celebrate the death of Jesus on Good Friday at the feast of Easter which is a completely different date (often in a different month).

You must decide

These facts are outside our area of study, so you will have to decide for yourself whether the Church has done right in changing the calendar. But it is enough for me to say that whether you keep the old feasts or the new Church calendar it is still a good thing to set days apart for God and if so not to profane them.

Certainly, the Sabbath warrants our consideration

because it was instituted before the old covenant and therefore the new covenant will not annul it. What the law does not establish it can not annul. The Sabbath has nothing to do with the law, it is a principle of Creation just as much as is the law of gravity.

Paul says that one person makes one day holy and another person makes a different day holy, and we must not judge one another.

One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it (Romans 14:5-6).

These scriptures show that it is not wrong for a day or season to be set apart - be holy - under the new covenant.

3. Objects and buildings

Is it possible that an inanimate object such as my bass guitar, my office desk, or the church building be holy to God under the dispensation of grace? Here again it is a difficult area, but I believe that although it is not a legal requirement to separate anything we possess it is nevertheless a good thing to sanctify - separate - any material thing that we possess for God's exclusive use.

My own choice

We have a room at our ministry headquarters that we have separated - dedicated - to God for his use only. Our children are not allowed to play in this room. There is no television or radio in it. We keep it exclusively for prayer, fasting, worship and the word of God.

Is this a legalistic approach? Of course it could well

be, but there is no reason for it to be so. It will all depend on whether I understand the principle that Jesus taught his disciples, *the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath* (Mark 2:27). God made the Sabbath for us to rest and assess our working week and not to tie us into some legalistic system.

For his purpose only

You must be persuaded in your own mind, but I did dedicate my musical instruments to God because I wanted them to be blessed and used for his purposes. I have also dedicated my house and everything that is in it to glorify God. I have dedicated my time and my talents for God's exclusive use, and I really believe God is pleased when, from a willing heart and not from necessity, we dedicate things to him.

My conclusion to all these areas is that nothing has changed from the old covenant to the new covenant in this respect of separating people, objects and days to God, but that now we do it freely out of love for God. It is because of grace. It is not a legal obligation and it is not a burden or commandment of the law.

Chapter 16

Gone to the Dogs

And you shall be holy men unto me: You shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; you shall cast it to the dogs.

Exodus 22:31

This proverb of Jesus says, *don't give Holy things to dogs*, so we now need to define what dogs represent throughout the bible. There are not many references to dogs, but the ones that are in the bible give us clear guidance.

There is an interesting verse in Deuteronomy that mentions dogs. *There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD your God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD your God (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).*

The literal command is that the children of Israel were not to allow any of their daughters to become prostitutes, nor their sons to become homosexuals. They were forbidden to bring the financial proceeds of female or

male prostitution as an offering for a vow into the house of God. The implication is obvious; sexual immorality defiles God's temple and those people who practice it under the old covenant had to be kept out of the temple.

False prophets

Peter, in his second letter to the Church, uses the ways of a dog as an illustration of people who have known God, received his salvation, but have then returned back to their carnal ways, ending up as false prophets.

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, **The dog is turned to his own vomit again;** and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).*

Backslidden teachers

Isaiah uses the same imagery in describing false teachers in Israel. Those who should have known better, those who should have been watching for the good of God's people.

His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter (Isaiah 56:10-11).

Other references throughout the bible show us that those people who were outside the kingdom of Israel were considered unclean or unholy; that is, they were not separated to God. They were typified by an unclean animal, the dog.

The children's bread to the dogs

In the New Testament those who were carnal and fleshly and outside of the nation of Israel were considered in the same way. Here are some of those scriptures.

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil ... but he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

*But he answered and said, **It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs** (from Matthew 15:22-26).*

***Beware of dogs**, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. **For we are the circumcision**, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence **in the flesh** (Philippians 3:2-3).*

The New Jerusalem

*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (New Jerusalem). **For without are dogs**, and sorcerers, and whore mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie (Revelation 22:14-15).*

From these scriptures we can see that 'dogs' specifically

refers to people and not as we might have supposed to devils and spiritual powers. However, all that is of the world, which by definition is unclean is to be avoided as something that will defile us. We are told by the Apostle John to be separate from the world's system.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

Everything that is of the world is not of God and will defile our holiness and can be attributed in a scriptural sense to the word 'dogs'.

Don't do it

The proverb will now speak for itself. All worldly systems, sexual immorality, and carnality are unclean to God. Therefore, whatever we have dedicated to God, be it our lives, our children, our homes and possessions, must be kept separate for God's exclusive use, and we are not allowed to mix holy and profane.

Why is God so adamant? It is because we are not forced to dedicate anything to God. We do it out of our own free will, and therefore **we have no excuse to defile what we have separated**. It is a very serious thing to do so. Far better not to make holy, than to make holy and then defile.

The mixture - an abomination

Mixture that brings confusion is always an abomination to God, and so we fail miserably when we bring any of the world's systems and thinking into our Christian lifestyle. The kingdoms of this world are unclean, because the king

and god of this world is unclean. Can any of the smallest part of Satan's kingdom be clean and undefiled? Can any of these exist alongside the holy kingdom of heaven; show business, politics, fame, the rat race, ego, self?

Surely these are an affront to the kingdom of heaven. Am I not giving holy things to dogs when I bring the world into the Church, or when I share my talents with God and with Satan's kingdom?

Out of Date?

Does this type of teaching seem out of date? Could I be in danger of teaching bondage and legalism under this dispensation of grace? On the contrary, for although false holiness does lead to legalism, true holiness leads to freedom and abundant life.

I would argue that in my pursuit of holiness I am freer than any Christian I have yet met, and my life is open to scrutiny by anyone. I can say with Paul that in actual fact everything and anything is lawful to me, *but many things are not beneficial, or profitable and so I will not be in bondage to those things* (see 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23).

Areas to consider

To conclude this proverb I will list six areas for us to consider so that we can ascertain whether we have separated them exclusively for God's use or whether we have perhaps allowed them to become defiled. Remember Jesus said. *Do not give holy things to the dogs.*

1. Our talents

If we do decide to dedicate our talents to God then we must make sure that we do not use them for anything of the world. We must now use our talent as **a ministry to God**

and not for **a means of entertaining God's people** - there is a vast difference.

2 Our Money

We have already looked at the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 4, where they purported to have given all of their money from their house sale to God and yet in truth had kept back part for themselves.

All of the money belonged to this couple. It was theirs and they did not have to give any to God, but their deceit and lies were a sin punishable by death, even under the dispensation of grace.

3. Our Church

If we dedicate a building to God it becomes his and is now separated for his use. We must be careful not to turn it into a social center where ungodly activities are carried on.

Evangelism, according to the new Testament, is carried out when we go into the world. We should be preaching the gospel on the world's territory, not when we bring the world into the Church.

4. Our homes

If we do dedicate our home to God then we should be careful what we allow into it. If I watch a movie on the television and it portrays a brothel scene, or some adultery, is it possible that I could be defiling my home?

I would not commit adultery myself, so is it a good situation if I should watch someone else committing adultery inside my own home? Of course you will have to decide for yourself what you do in all of these areas. I am just presenting these questions for your consideration in the light of what Jesus says as we need to deal with these

issues.

5. Ourselves

Paul says that our bodies are now the temple of God and the **Holy Ghost**. It is a serious thing to defile it.

Don't you know that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.

What? Don't you know that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, said he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. What? **Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost** which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own?*

*For you are bought with a price: **therefore glorify God in your body**, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).*

6. Those in the ministry

*As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, **Separate me Barnabas and Saul** for the work whereunto I have called them (Acts 13:2).*

When a person is ordained and separated unto the ministry it is a very serious thing to bring the world's system into that ministry, and I have shown that false prophets in the church are those who have been separated for God's use and then become entangled again in this world's systems.

How easy it is, when in the ministry, to begin power seeking and empire building. How easy it is to become

political, and lobby for the results you desire. How easy it becomes to manipulate people for your own ends. These are practices of the world, and the rat race, and they have no part in the kingdom of God.

I am sure the list would be a long one if we were to explore all the ways that we can become defiled, but if we have the principle in our minds then we will be on our guard and will:

a) Make sure that if we do dedicate something to God we are willing to pay the price and keep it separate for God's exclusive use.

b) Be diligent not to corrupt anything that we have already made holy and if we do fail, in any area, repent quickly and start afresh.

Chapter 17

Pearls of Wisdom

The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

Proverbs 10:21

We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

1 Corinthians 2:6-7

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every gate was of one pearl.

Revelation 21:21

In the last chapter I showed that holy things are always to do with the natural earth; goods, people, or seasons. In the second half of the verse Jesus says, *Don't cast your pearls before swine*, and I believe that pearls are to do with spiritual things. 'Holy things to dogs' is to do with mixture

- impurity; but this parable about pearls has nothing to do with mixture it is to do with wisdom or foolishness. From the literal statement it is obviously foolish to give pearls - something of value - to swine, who can not appreciate them or use them wisely.

I will apply the same method as I did with holy things to dogs. I will look at what pearls symbolise in the bible and then what swine represent and the parable will interpret itself.

Waste or investment

Before we look at pearls we need to realise that there are two ways of looking at the word 'cast' ...

a) To throw away or dispose of, as in Ecclesiastes 3:6 ... *a time to keep, and a time to cast away*, or in Matthew 5:13

You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

b) To invest for increase as when we cast a net to catch fish or cast seeds to the earth for a harvest.

It is evident from the parable that Jesus is using the word in its second sense when he says, "don't think that you can invest, or get an increase, by giving pearls to pigs" - they don't value them. If you do you will have just disposed of them - cast them away as worthless.

Pearls are valuable in themselves so it is all the more important to be wise with our pearls and where we cast - invest - them. Jesus doesn't say "don't cast pearls", he says be wise and don't invest them where there is no chance of

them bringing any profit.

There is another difference between the two parables. The first is a commandment, 'Don't mix holy and unholy', but the second one gives us advice and tells us the consequences of ignoring the advice. Not only do swine not value pearls, but they will 'turn and rend us'.

In other words not only will we waste the pearls but we will be damaged in the process.

The attire of a woman

There are not many references in the bible to pearls but where it mentions them it is easy to understand what they represent. Many references speak for themselves and pearls are listed along with precious stones as things of value.

*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, **or pearls, or costly array** (1 Timothy 2-9).*

The references that are of interest to us in this study are where pearls are mentioned as the attire of a woman, and I believe that this is where we can understand their meaning in this parable.

Every woman in the bible represents one of two women, either the bride of Christ or the counterfeit bride - the impostor, the whore of Babylon.

The whore and the virgin

Revelation 17:4-5 shows us that the counterfeit woman, Babylon, has pearls as part of her attire.

*And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones **and pearls**, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and*

filthiness of her fornication:

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON, THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

When Babylon is judged by God and is destroyed then the 'pearls of Babylon' will also fall *Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, **and pearls!** In one hour so great riches is come to nought...* (from Revelation 18:16-17).

The bride is a city

The true woman, the bride of Christ is also a city - The New Jerusalem - and the gates of this city are pearls. ***And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every gate was of one pearl*** (Revelation 21:21).

To understand further what pearls represent it will help if we understand how pearls are formed, for they are not mined from the earth as are other precious stones such as emeralds or diamonds. The pearl is formed through suffering. The oyster, to protect itself from the irritation of a fragment of something that the oyster ingests, gets imbedded on the inside of the shell and the oyster surrounds that foreign fragment with countless layers of mother of pearl to produce a rare and precious pearl.

Hidden wisdom

In our everyday vernacular, if someone says something profound we say, "That's a pearl", and I believe that this is what is meant when Jesus talks about wasting our pearls. I believe that pearls are the **hidden wisdom** and revelation that comes **through our trials and experiences**, and not

with study. That is why wisdom usually comes with age and not youth. The trials and experiences of life make us wise in the natural, and the trials as a Christian form in us the precious life of Christ, the life of the virgin bride, the hidden wisdom that this world and carnal Christians know nothing about.

The pearls of the false woman are false pearls and her false wisdom causes the very suffering of the true Church.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration (Revelation 17:6).

Parables are pearls

We can say that a parable is a pearl because it is a natural story, but with a hidden spiritual meaning that the uninitiated can not know. Jesus explains this in Matthew's Gospel.

*The disciples came, and said unto him, Why speak to them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the **mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given.*

*Therefore, I speak to them in parables: because **they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand** ...*

But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear (from Matthew 13:10-16).

Wisdom from above

Paul also talks about the hidden wisdom that the world knows nothing about.

*We speak wisdom **among them that are perfect**: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world,*

that come to nought:

*but we speak **the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Corinthians 2:6-8).

The two wisdoms

In his letter, James talks about two types of wisdom. He says that the wisdom from above produces the very life and character of God, and the wisdom of this world (that is actually satanic and is the false wisdom) produces the character and wisdom of the wrong tree, the knowledge of good and evil. Just as the occult offers enlightenment and revelation (which is the false light) so it also offers its initiates the hidden wisdom.

However, it is a false wisdom and James says it is earthy, sensual and devilish

*... If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. **This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.***

For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work.

***But the wisdom that is from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy* (James 3:14-17).

The city and the bride

The entrance to the New Jerusalem is through gates of pearl. In other words there is no other way into the heavenly city but by that which is formed through the trials and

suffering of a Christian. Paul says that they who suffer with Christ will also reign with him.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12).

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

The suffering of a Christian will form this wisdom that the world does not know about. When the iron and bamboo curtains fell it seems to me that all the Christians from the West rush in to educate the suffering church about victory, success and prosperity in Jesus. What they should be doing is going in to **be** educated and to seek the wisdom that only the suffering Church can impart.

The city and the whore

The false woman, Babylon, also has the pearls as her attire, but she is an impostor because her wisdom has come from persecuting the bride and from her avarice and pride, not her suffering.

*How much she has glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, **and shall see no sorrow** (Revelation 18:7).*

She has the correct outward attire of the true bride, but her wisdom is not from above. It is this false wisdom that will seduce the whole world and, sad as it may sound, I believe much of the church. The whore is very attractive to the natural man and extremely seductive. If the time was not shortened then the very elect would be deceived.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect (Matthew 24:24).

To not accept this is to be already seduced. My

conclusion then as to what pearls signify is this:- Pearls are the revealed spiritual knowledge, spiritual truth and wisdom that is only obtained by our trials, experiences and suffering.

Chapter 18

No Profit from Pigs

And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven footed, yet he doesn't chew with the cud; he is unclean to you.

Leviticus 11:7

As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

Proverbs 11:22

A prudent man conceals knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.

Proverbs 12:23

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb ... the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

2 Peter 2:22

Swine in the bible are very similar to dogs. They are regarded as unclean animals in the law of Moses and it was

forbidden for an Israelite to eat them. *And the swine, though he divides the hoof, and be cloven footed, yet he chews not the cud; he is unclean to you* (Leviticus 11:7).

The devils enter the swine

This of course applies in a spiritual sense, for when the devils were cast out of a man by Jesus they requested that he should let them inhabit the swine, and Jesus allowed them this request. *So the devils besought him, saying, If you cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters* (Matthew 8:31-32).

A pig sty is symbolic of the place where a person ends up, after leaving their heavenly father and wasting their inheritance; as in the prodigal son. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him* (Luke 15:15-16).

False prophets

It is the same when a Christian goes away from God, seeks fame, fortune and the pleasures of this world and waste their spiritual inheritance in the coming kingdom. Peter says that these one time, on fire Christians, have become renegade false prophets in the Church. He likens them to dogs returning to their vomit or to swine that were washed to their wallowing again in the mire. They have been purified - made holy, and now they have become defiled and polluted. What a sad state for a Christian to

find themselves in.

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22).

The good news is that for many people the pig sty is a beginning of reality and returning to their father. How many Christians have thanked God for the pig sty after they have returned and been restored?

I believe there are three categories that swine represent in this statement of Jesus:

- 1. False prophet in the Church**
- 2. Worldly Christians**
- 3. Non Christians**

Jesus says, that we should not cast our pearls before swine, but how do we then apply what we have just read in our practical lives, and what should it mean to us? It means that the revelation and wisdom that we have purchased through our trials and our experience are very precious and not to be wasted on people who do not understand or who have been blinded to the truth by their backsliding and carnality.

Repentance the key

There will never be any profit to the kingdom of God by trying to invest in these people. A worldly Christian or a false prophet needs to hear the message of repentance. They need to be told to return to their father.

The non Christian needs to hear the good news that Jesus died for all his sins and that he can have eternal life. Only

a disciple of Christ will appreciate the hidden wisdom and use it to bring profit to the kingdom.

They will rend you

Jesus says these people will not appreciate your pearls of wisdom and it will actually cause you damage for they will then, after rejecting the wisdom, attack you. Deep truths and words of spiritual wisdom are for the spiritually wise - those who will profit from the revelation that you impart to them.

I can remember a few years ago starting to share with a fellow minister a misgiving I had concerning one of the doctrines of his denomination. To me it was a revelation, but before I even told him my new thoughts he ran upstairs and ten minutes later came down with a pile of heavy theological books and began to preach at me.

My own experience

I sat and listened in amazement for I had not even told him my revelation. After he had finished he said, "Well brother, if you do not believe this doctrine I doubt if you are even a Christian at all!" All this from my opening remarks that I had a misgiving! I have learned my lesson and now realise that I was casting my pearls before swine. Not only did he not value what I had to say, he turned and accused me of not even being 'born again'.

I hope that I have convinced you of what I have stated up to now, but if not it will be good if I can show that Jesus, and then Paul, used this principle in their ministry.

First, let us look at some of the scriptures about the ministry of Jesus. In public and to the Pharisees (who had become false prophets by definition) Jesus always spoke to them in hidden parables as I have already shown in

previous chapters. Jesus did this to hide the truth from those who would turn and rend him. To the disciples he explained the hidden wisdom in detail, but privately.

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world (Matthew 13:34-35).

And he said unto them (the disciples), Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables (Mark 4:11).

Paul's ministry

Paul acted in the same manner with his revelations as the following scriptures will show. To the outsiders Paul preached the cross and Jesus crucified, but to the churches he was always saying; *"I will show you a mystery"*, and he then revealed the hidden wisdom, the pearls.

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect (1 Corinthians 1:17).

For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51).

To finish this chapter about casting our pearls before

swine and also to end this part of the book about the wisdom from above, there is a perfect example of the two wisdoms in a parable where Jesus spoke about a pearl.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it (Matthew 13:45-46).

Jesus tells the above parable about a man seeking pearls and when he finds one of great price he sells all that he has to purchase it. Because it is a parable, the meaning is hidden and this perfectly illustrates my point, Most Christians have put their own interpretation to this parable and arrive at the very opposite of the mystery of the kingdom that Jesus is telling his disciples about.

The pearl is the bride

There is a hymn that was very popular in the early days of the Pentecostal movement that says, "I've found the pearl of greatest price, My heart doth sing for joy", and it is all about us finding the pearl of great price - Jesus.

Many bible commentaries agree with this song and say the same thing - that we must be like the merchant man who is willing to give all he has to purchase the highly valuable pearl - Jesus Christ.

The problem is that this is natural thinking and not divine revelation, and even in the natural it does not make any sense. **We do not seek and buy Christ.** On the contrary, Jesus seeks us and has purchased us with his own blood. The Church, his bride, is the pearl that Jesus came to seek and purchase. The hidden wisdom in this parable is actually the hidden wisdom about the bride of Christ.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ

and the church (Ephesians 5:32).

The next book in this series will be the last one and will bring the conclusions to this sermon of Jesus. It will also bring the decisions that we, as disciples, have to make. The choices about which gate we will enter, which road we walk on, which tree we are eating from and which foundation we are building upon.

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BY MAURICE BARRATT

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Maurice Barratt

Maurice was brought up under the dynamic Pentecostal ministry of his father Bill Barratt, part of the Barratt and Williams healing ministry in the 1950s and 60s.

He became a Christian at the age of six, and from his youth lived a conventional charismatic Christian lifestyle. But at the age of 30 he was deeply affected by his father's teaching from the Sermon on the Mount concerning the principles of real Christian discipleship - what it really means to follow Jesus. From that time on he began to change from a conventional, 'normal' Christian to a man convinced that what is lacking in Christians today is not supernatural power or gifts but the fruit - the character of Christ.

For the last twenty years Maurice has been committed to his call - to teach the church the practical principles of discipleship. He has taught in churches, housegroups, prisons, schools and bible colleges, throughout Europe, Canada and the USA.

Many of Maurice's messages are recorded on CD and are also available on DVD, including a major series on the Sermon on the Mount covering 60, 1 hour studies. He has a series of 16 teachings on 'Intercession' that he was asked to teach on UCB radio, and has a series of 10 studies entitled - '6000 years of Babylon', tracing the system from the seed of Cain to the present age. There are also many miscellaneous studies concerning the Christian life and conduct.

Maurice Barratt is available for ministry and can be contacted at the address at the front of this book.

About Barratt Ministries

Barratt Ministries is a Manchester-based Christian organization founded in 1985. Directors Maurice and Joanna Barratt have an international teaching ministry. Joanna is a singer with 15 music albums of her own songs, including two major projects of scripture in song - Psalm 119 and The Sermon on the Mount. Joanna also ministers in prisons, churches, house groups and women's fellowships.

Barratt Ministries is a multi-media ministry incorporating: publishing books and literature; recording music albums and teaching CD's; producing Music and teaching DVD's, and programmes for Christian radio and TV.

Barratt Ministries publish *Challenge*, a newsletter with teaching articles by Maurice and Joanna Barratt, every two months. It is available free of charge and post-free on request.

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