

The Church - Lesson

Tim Day - 2023



"Natural gifts are not enough in God's work." – *AW Tozer*

Our churches are in trouble. Yet, few seem to notice or even care. Many have been **compromised by the world** and **rendered lifeless** – *devoid of spiritual power.*

"I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because **the world has so much influence over the church.**" – *Charles Spurgeon*

It is all too easy to **play church**. We go to church to check the box. Many seem to subconsciously believe that they are **servicing God** by going to church; some even that they are **sacrificing for the cause of Christ** in their ritualistic attendance.

Our churches have become more of an **entertainment center**; a **social gathering** at best. Programs and activities have replaced the Holy Spirit as the True Leader of the church.

His *absence is rarely even recognized* above the din of **church tradition** and commotion.

"If the Holy Ghost came to some churches, there would be a stampede to the door." - *Leonard Ravenhill*

"Many people are dying a slow spiritual death because their hope lies in the **traditions of the church** only, and not in Jesus!" – *Charles Sims*

This is religion! Religion is boring!

Doctrine

The Christian world is made up of **differing positions** – various **doctrine** (*teaching about God*) and **theology** (*study of God*). We all have differing theological constructs that shape our view of God's word.

It is these **differing positions** regarding the elements of God's word that **lead to various camps, churches, and even diverse denominations**. Many have been warring for centuries. Most are **not all wrong; they are just not all right**. They are too often based on **half of God's word**.

“Most people don't want to know the truth. They just **want constant reassurance that what they believe is the truth**.”

It seems decidedly human nature, that “**we believe what we want to believe, because we want to believe what we believe, and for no other reason**.”

Others are deeply **entrenched in error** that extends outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy – these are **apostate** – beyond the sound teaching regarding the essentials of the Christian faith. This teaching is addressing the former, the **incomplete understanding of God Truth and what it is doing to our otherwise sound churches**.

1 Corinthians 8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know

Paradigms

Paradigms are **frameworks** within which we interpret the evidence – body of data – the facts – the observable evidence. The definition of a paradigm is a widely accepted belief or concept. An example of paradigm is evolution. **Paradigm drives conclusion**. Our paradigms are often doctrine and theology.

Covenant Theology, Systematic Theology, Dispensational Theology, Reformed Theology, Armenian Theology, Wesleyan Theology, Puritan Theology, Charismatic Theology, etc. are **all doctrine of men**. They are **not inerrant**.

They are **useful lenses** through which to look at God's word. They provide interesting insight, vantage points we would not see otherwise to better understand God's truth.

Paradigms are **lenses**. They **color, taint, shape, affect, and limit** what we see.

They must be respected for what they are, **doctrine of men** – paradigms, lenses, frameworks. When they come to be **elevated above what God's word plainly says**, they lead us into **trouble**.

“If we have made up our minds about a doctrine, the light of God will come no more to us on that line, we cannot get it. This obtuse stage will end immediately [when] His resurrection life has its way with us.” – *Oswald Chambers*

Sadly, **it is our theological and doctrinal lens** that we too often use to view God’s word. We all have them – many of them – jumbled up in our thinking. They shape our understanding of Truth – our dogma, or opinions. But, it **should be the other way around**. We should be viewing our theology and doctrine through the ***lens of God’s word***.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 **Prove all things**; hold fast that which is good.

Ditches

There is a **ditch** on both sides of the **Road of Truth**.

For **every element** of God’s Word, Satan has a **counterfeit**. But, he has not **one, but two**.

He is either **adding to**, or **taking away from** God’s Word. This constitutes the ditches along the road.

“We have a right to believe whatever we want, but not everything we believe is right.” - *Ravi Zacharias*

Satan, the **father of lies**, would have us believe there **is but one counterfeit**. Thus, feeling confident we avoid the one we are aware of, we are all the more likely to fall for the other, the one we fail to recognize. How clever. How deceptive.

The **Road of Truth**, albeit **narrow**, is **wide enough** to stand on one side or the other with respect to the various elements of God’s Word.

We like a verse on **one side** of the Road of Truth and begin building a theology around it. We cherry-pick partial verses, and other verses out of context, to justify our **one-sided view of God’s Word**.

In time we slide into the ditch nearest our side of the road. We become **ditch-evangelists**, trying to pull other Christians into our ditch with us.

This is where **every single denomination** came from.

It is the refusal of one or both parties, to **embrace the sum-total of God’s Word**.

God's Word is in **tension**; it is an intentional tension. If we embrace the tension it will keep us in the middle of Truth.

The devil would have us face down, wallowing in **one ditch or the other**. It makes no difference to him which ditch; either is just as in error. Either **robs us of God power** and **checks our spiritual growth** right where we fall in. It has been said that, '*the only difference between a ditch and a grave are the dimensions*'.

"The soul has got out of intimate contact with God by leaning to its own religious understanding." – *Oswald Chambers*

[I could teach for weeks on the errors plaguing our churches. Today I am going to focus a big one – the ***Word and the Spirit divide***. (See: *The Church*)]

Midnight Cry



In the Olivet Discourse, after Jesus' description of the "*these things*" to look for in order to be able "*watch*" for His Second Coming, there is an unusual passage about "*virgins,*" "*lamps,*" "*oil,*" "*bridegroom,*" and a "**midnight cry.**"

Matthew 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten **virgins**, which took their **lamps**, and went forth to meet the **bridegroom**. 2 And five of them were **wise**, and five were **foolish**. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took **oil** in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, **they all slumbered and slept**. 6 And **at midnight there was a cry made**, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and *trimmed their lamps*. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, **the bridegroom came**; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and **the door was shut**. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the *Son of man* cometh.

The text is a picture of an ancient **mid-eastern wedding**; a Jewish wedding. Most take this parable to mean that we **must be ready for Christ's appearing**. No doubt, we should.

Many folks equate the "*virgin*" with the believer. The "*wise virgins*" were ready; the "*foolish virgins*" were not. But, is that a proper interpretation? Is it the only interpretation? Let's break it down to see if there is more to learn.

The Oil

Most folks agree that the "**oil**" is a reference to the **Holy Spirit**. That almost seems obvious from Scripture. The Holy Spirit is our "*earnest*" of salvation, but also the **power** for believers that **came at Pentecost** at the birthday of the Church.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself **bearth witness** with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

1 John 4:13 Hereby know we that **we dwell in him, and he in us**, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

The **Holy Spirit is our source of direction and power** as we walk in this lost world. We are promised by Jesus that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead us into all Truth:

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the **Spirit of truth, is come**, he will **guide you into all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Among the more than **200 times** that oil is mentioned in the Bible, it is usually a **metaphor of the Holy Spirit's presence**. We see this in the ritual anointing of prophets, priests and kings, and those desiring healing. For example, when the prophet-judge Samuel anointed **David** with *oil* to be the new king of Israel, the next statement is that "*the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.*" (1 Sam 16:13)

In David's case, all his accomplishments subsequent to being anointed by the Spirit are to be interpreted as **empowered** by the Spirit. *By contrast, the Holy Spirit had abandoned King Saul because of disobedience.* We see the same connection with respect to **Jesus' First Coming**:

Acts 10:38 How God **anointed** Jesus of Nazareth with the **Holy Ghost** and with **power**: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Every reference to anointing (oil) implies either a **plea for the Holy Spirit's action** or a **revelation of the Holy Spirit's presence to empower** individuals. He is the Power; He *brings Life and Power to the Word.*

Sadly, in today's church, the **Holy Spirit is virtually relegated as unnecessary**. Our pastors learn in **seminary** to run a church entirely without the Holy Spirit. Today's church is run like a secular business. We even bring in business operations and planning techniques.

"Our blunder (or shall we frankly say our sin?) has been to neglect the doctrine of the **Spirit** to a point where **we virtually deny Him** His place in the Godhead. This denial has not been by open doctrinal statement, for we have clung closely enough to the Biblical position wherever our creedal pronouncements are concerned. ... Brief reference is made to Him in the

Doxology and the Benediction. Further than that **He might as well not exist.**" – AW Tozer

This is a grievous error. **Without the Holy Spirit** there is, and can be, **no Power**. We thusly **play church**. *We pretend to be led by the Holy Spirit.* Is there any wonder that our mainline denominations are dead and lifeless?

1 Thessalonians 1:5 For our gospel came *not unto you in word only, but also in power*, and in the *Holy Ghost ...*

The Lamp

The "**lamp**" appears in Scripture to be often a metaphor for the **Word of God** – Truth.

Psalms 119:105 Thy **word is a lamp** unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Proverbs 6:23 For the **commandment is a lamp**; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

The story of the **lamp** under a bushel is one of the parables of Jesus. This is referring to not sharing the Truth of the Gospel, the "Good News;" the Word.

It is interesting that most of our churches have removed the *Holy Spirit – the Oil*; now **mega-churches are throwing out the Word – the Lamp**. Jesus did not even cover this category of "foolish virgins" in His midnight cry parable. At least the **foolish virgins had the Lamp**. These new church that are jettisoning God's Word are apostate – they do not qualify as "*virgins.*" (See: *Mega-Church Madness*)

"Truth and God are never separated. God's truth is a reflection of who He is and His perfect character. ... **A clarion call needs to be made today in the Christian Church to get back into the Bible.** Pulpits need to get back into the Bible. **Christians need to get back into their Bibles.**" - Jeff Kinley

The Bridegroom

Likewise, it seems abundantly obvious that the "**bridegroom**" who "*tarried,*" is an allusion to **Jesus Christ** regarding His impending Second Coming. That is affirmed in verse 13 referring to "*the Son of man;*" referencing **Daniel's description of a preincarnate vision** of Jesus.

Jesus spoke of Himself as the “**Son of man**” often, speaking in code, as it were, to those who knew their prophecy.

Daniel 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 **And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Mark 10:45 For even the **Son of man** came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Revelation 14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the **Son of man**, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

The Sleeping Virgins

But then, who are the “**virgins**?” Theologian R. T. Kendall uses Jesus' parable of the ten virgins to describe **the slumbering condition of the church in the last days**. He believes the **virgins are the churches of the last days**.

It is interesting that “*they all slumbered and slept.*” Yes, they all “*slept,*” not just the “*foolish virgins.*” Could it be that the “*virgins*” are churches, or maybe the body of Believers? And that the ‘*midnight cry*’ is a final *wakeup call* to the Church in the Last Days?

Consider that a **virgin** is considered **spotless, undefiled, and pure**. If the “*virgins*” refer to churches, these would be the better, more doctrinally sound, and theologically pure churches. We are not talking about the aberrant apostate church steeped in compromised and false doctrine. Both the “*wise*” and the “*foolish*” are “*virgins,*” set apart and undefiled.

I do not think anyone would disagree that the average **Church today is asleep and slumbering**; it is indeed, **powerless** – even the doctrinally sound.

Moreover, we have **self-divided** into “**Word**” churches and “**Spirit**” churches; in other words, *mainline protestant churches* and *charismatic churches*.

The “*Word*” camp is focused on the Word and doctrine only, while largely *denying the power of God*.

2 Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but **denying the power** thereof: from such turn away.

“With the fullness of the Holy Ghost ... **evangelical Christianity believes it, but nobody experiences it.**” – *AW Tozer*

The “*Spirit*” churches are so **desperate for the power of God** – sign, wonders, miracles – that the “**Word**” often takes a **backseat**. Their emphasis is on getting back to the **book of Acts** – to **Pentecost**. This latter camp tends to wind up in a host of **extremes and aberrant beliefs** without being governed by the framework of God’s Word; their services are frequently more akin to chaos.

The former tends to want **status quo** and man-made order; they do not embrace the messiness that comes with the Power of the Holy Spirit. This group focuses more on **doctrine** – the Word only. While there is nothing wrong with emphasizing truth, doctrine and theological correctness, they are often guilty of **excluding the Power of God**.

Matthew 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 ***This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*** 9 But in **vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

Trimmed Lamps

The text says that the “all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.” So, **all the virgin’s lamps had gone out**. All trimmed their lamps. It was not just the foolish, but the wise as well. What does it mean to ‘trim’ a lamp?

An oil lamp has a **wick that carries the oil** to the flame. Once the lamp goes out, soot and oily ash builds up at the tip of the wick. The wick must be **trimmed, cleaned**, to allow the “*oil*” to flow properly again. The “*virgins*” had all fallen to sleep and their lamps had gone out. Thus, they all trimmed their lamps.

As a lamp burns the oil, it burns without consuming the wick. It is somewhat analogous to Moses’ ‘*Burning Bush.*’ The wick is “*not consumed.*”

Exodus 3:2 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the **bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.**

It is only when the lamp goes out that the wick must be trimmed. So what is the wick? This may be a stretch, but I take it to mean you and me, the ‘**believer.**’ Remember the Church is the body of believers. To trim the lamp, is to trim the wick.

The Lamp is the Word; we must have the undefiled “*Word*.” But we, as the wick, **must be made clean, pure, spotless and undefiled**. We must be in right standing before the Lord. We must submit to God’s **refining fire**; we must allow the Holy Spirit to **sanctify** us in order that the Word and the Spirit burn brightly through us.

Awakening

If the “***lamp***” is the “*word*” and the “***oil***” is the “*power*,” maybe the “***midnight cry***” is a call to bring the two back together in the *unity of Spirit and Truth*. For, it should not be *either/or*, but rather, *both/and*. We need the **Spirit for Power** and the **Word for Truth**.

The Spirit empowers the Word. Notice that the “*foolish virgins*” lacked “*oil*,” they had the **Word without the Spirit**. Does that not sound like our **dead mainline churches**? The “*wise virgins*” had the Lamp and the Oil, the **Word and the Spirit**.

The **Midnight Cry** is about the **church awakening** and preaching the **gospel with unprecedented power** – with *signs and wonders again*, like the early church. Like **Peter in Acts**:

Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all **boldness they may speak thy word**, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that **signs and wonders** may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

Many are already waking up to realize that, **if what we have now is all there is, we are in sad shape**. We cannot stay in separate camps. We must come together.

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in **spirit and in truth**.

What we need is an **awakening** to **both Power and Truth** – simultaneously. **Truth without Power is dead; Power without Truth leads to erroneous extremes**.

Both the ***dead word-only church***, the ***unrestrained charismatic-Spirit church*** are **Ishmael**. The true awakening “*in Spirit and in Truth*” will be **Isaac** – the “*child of promise*.”

“How many blessed **truths have gotten snowed under**. People believe them, but they are just **not being taught**, that is all.” – *AW Tozer*

What we desperately need is a renewed emphasis on both Word/Truth (lamp) and Spirit/Power (oil) – no longer to be separated by either/or. Then the “***midnight cry***” is likely an **awakening with Power** like has not been seen before **since Pentecost** as we enter the last days. Consider **Joel’s** promise:

Joel 2:28 And **it shall come to pass** afterward, that **I will pour out my spirit** upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids **in those days** will I **pour out my spirit**. ... 31 ... **before** the great and terrible **day of the Lord** come.

This occurs "**before**" the "**day of the Lord**," before Christ's Second Coming. "**In those days**" refers to the last days leading up to Jesus' Return when God will "**pour out [His] spirit**."

We need the **Supernatural Gifts of the Holy Spirit** brought back into our churches. We should burn the '*Gifts Assessment Instrument*' now in virtually every dead church in America, and seek the real Spiritual Gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit.

"The time is ... for a rethinking ... **spiritual gifts** within the church of Christ. The subject has fallen into the hands of people for the most part *extreme and irresponsible* and has become associated with *fanaticism* in its various forms. ... Prejudices ... make the consideration of this subject extremely difficult, but its **neglect is costing us more than we should be willing to pay**. A revival of true New Testament Christianity must surely bring with it a manifestation of spiritual gifts." – *AW Tozer*

Ditches

The old traditions and doctrines of man have blinded the masses from seeing scripture the way God intended. Both camps have "*thrown the baby out with the bathwater*," as it were.

One camp is **denying the Power** and holds to a *lifeless form of religion*; the other camp is so **desperate for Power** they ignore God's Word only to wind up in crazy extremes and false doctrine.

"[Satan] has taken some fanatical, weird, wild-eyed Christians who do things that they shouldn't, and he has stationed them in the middle of God's cornfield, and warns, '**Now, don't you go near that doctrine about the Holy Spirit** because if you do, you will act just like these wild-eyed fanatics.'" – *AW Tozer*

They are both in **ditches**, albeit opposite ditches, and as always, the **truth lies between the warring extremes**. (See: *Ditches*) We will never experience God's power in Truth until both camp **climbs out of their respective ditches** and seek the Word and the Spirit.

“Biblical illiteracy is a major issue in the church (in both camps). But it came from all directions. ... On the other side, in the charismatic movement, came people that had **out-of-Bible experiences** ... And since the Bible was not being taught, it **opened the door for these prophets that are false** to rise up and fill what was a condition of malnutrition in the body of Christ.” – *Mario Murillo*

We must move between the warring extremes to the centerline of Truth. We need to gather together in **unity** on the **Road of Truth** running between the ditches.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 For our gospel came *not unto you in word only, but also in power*, and in the *Holy Ghost*, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

It is high-time that we **came together** to seek both **the Truth and the Power** together. It is but another **Old Tradition** robbing the Church of power. According to the prophet Joel, there is coming a day, before Christ returns, when *‘He will pour out His spirit on all flesh.’*

Sadly, I strongly suspect that those who are not in right standing before God and walking in the Spirit, who are **standing pridefully in their respective ditches**, will miss it. I suspect those who have yet learned to hear God for themselves, will miss it as well.

“The next thing to happen on God's calendar is not the Second Coming but rather **the awakening of the church** before the Second Coming. Matthew 25:6 says, "At **midnight** [‘middle of night’ - *meses de nuktos*] there was a cry. ... **"cry"** and the actual coming of the bridegroom (see verses 7-10). The awakening of the **ten virgins** - who I take to **represent the church** in the very last days — precedes the coming of the bridegroom. ... The scary thing about sleep is that you don't know you were asleep until you wake up. ... The midnight cry is coming!” – *RT Kendall*

Last Trump

The *“Last Trump”* in Scripture is used to announce *“the Day of the Lord,”* Christ's Second Coming. It is a *“great” “trumpet”* sounded announcing Christ's return and the gathering of His elect.

1 Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the **last trump**: for the **trumpet shall sound**, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Matthew 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a **great sound of a trumpet**, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

However, it seems that this '**midnight cry**' is not being equated to the "*Last Trump*." Thus, it is not announcing Christ's immediate coming. Rather, it seems to be a wakeup call to the slumbering church ("*slumbered and slept*") that **His coming is growing near**. It is a prophetic call to **return to the full gospel**.

Kendall believes, "*it will be the greatest awakening since Pentecost. When revival comes, three things will happen: nominal Christians become truly converted, sleepy Christians are awakened, and those in the World will be saved.*" It is a cry of the Holy Spirit Himself to awaken the slumbering Church **to the Word and the Spirit**.

We have all heard the phrase "*at the stroke of midnight*," meaning at the last moment before something happens. We may very well be in, or **approaching, the last moment**. It is a call for an awakening to embrace both *the Word and the Spirit – the Truth and the Power* – before Jesus comes back. The "*virgins*" are awoken at "*midnight*," meaning the **hour was late**; or rather, there is **little time left**.

Mark 13:35 Watch ye therefore: for **ye know not when the master of the house cometh**, *at even, or at **midnight**, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning*:

Job 34:20 In a moment shall they die, and **the people shall be troubled at **midnight****, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.

Wigglesworth Prophecy

The **1947 Smith Wigglesworth Prophecy**, *if true*, may rank among the most important end-time prophecies that the Church has received. It **parallels this concept**. First, there would be a renewal and restoration of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit along with the Gifts of the Spirit. Many will leave the traditional dead lifeless churches looking for more of what God promised.

Meanwhile, man-centered churches and church movements will wane. Then, there will come about a **renewed emphasis on both Word/Truth and Spirit/Power together**.

"During the next few decades there will be two distinct moves of the Holy Spirit across the church in Great Britain. The first move will affect every church that is open to receive it and will be characterized by a restoration of the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The **second move of the Holy Spirit will result in people leaving historic churches and planting new churches**. In the duration of each of these moves, the people who are involved will say 'This is the great revival'. But the Lord says 'No, neither is this the great revival but both are steps towards it.'

When the new church phase is on the wane, there will be evidenced in the churches something that has not been seen before: **a coming together of those with an emphasis on the Word and those with an emphasis on the Spirit**. When the Word and the Spirit come together, there will be the biggest movement of the Holy Spirit that the nation, and indeed the world, has ever seen. It will mark the beginning of a revival that will eclipse anything that has been witnessed within these shores, even the Wesleyan and the Welsh revivals of former years. The **outpouring of God's Spirit** will flow over from the UK to the mainland of Europe, and from there will begin a missionary move to the ends of the earth."

<http://www.jonasclark.com/revival-history/smith-wigglesworths-rare-1947-prophecy.html>

This seems to be already underway. Sadly, our present method of handling the scripture is effectively blocking the progress of the Spirit-filled Believers, and blocking the re-establishment of the true and complete "*Gospel of the Kingdom*."

"*You will receive **power***' (Acts 1:8a). '*Eagerly desire the greater **gifts***' (1 Corinthians 12:31a). **Anything that God has ever** done for a soul He will do for anyone else, if the conditions are met. ... **Faith says:** Anything He did anywhere else He will do here; **anything He did any other time He is willing to do now**; anything He ever did for other people He is willing to do for us! ... We walk out in this fullness of the Spirit, if we will **yield and obey.**" – AW Tozer

I would suggest that, now is the time to **put the Oil back in the Lamp**.

We cannot light the Lamp without the Oil. Without the Oil, the Lamp provides no light. There is **no Power apart from the Holy Spirit**. The Truth becomes just words, just doctrine and theology, without Power. It is merely religion.

Now is the **time to seek God in Spirit and Truth**. Now is the time to bring the Word and the Spirit back together to finish our mission in Power and Truth before Jesus returns. The mainline Word denominations have something to learn from our Spirit-charismatic brethren; likewise, our charismatic churches could learn from the Word churches.

"We are going to have to restudy this whole teaching of the **place of the Holy Spirit in the Church**, so the Body can operate again. If the life goes out of a man's body, he is said to be a corpse. ... So it is in the Church of Christ. It is literally true that **some churches are dead**. **The Holy Spirit has gone out of them** and all you have left are 'the remains.' You have the potential of the church but you do not have the Church. ... *When the*

Holy Spirit is not present in the Church, you have to get along after the methods of business or politics or psychology or human effort.” – AW Tozer

We must have “*trimmed [our] lamps*” to be ready for the “*Oil*.” In other words, we must again rightly divide God’s Word so as to allow the Oil of the Spirit to bring it to life – to light the Lamp of Truth. **Our wicks must be made pure**, clean, *refined, sanctified* to allow the Oil of the Spirit to flow through us as He pleases.

The hour is late. **Midnight is coming.** The cry will be made. We must **wakeup and come together** before it is too late; before the time has passed. The “*wise*” will hear and obey; the “*foolish*” will continue as they have.

As a prominent Pastor said, “*We will not see revival while God’s children live in a Halfway House.*”

Maranatha!

Note: I do not want to get carried away with the metaphors in this parable. RT Kendall says “*a parable does not stand on all four legs.*” Meaning that you can carry metaphors in a parable only so far without making it mean something other than what it was intended to mean.

I pray that I haven’t carried the metaphors too far. However, I am confident that there is a deeper meaning in this parable than has typically been conveyed.

Likewise, even if this Matthew 25 parable is not referring to the bringing of the Word and Spirit back together in our churches, the message holds true. We need to bring the Word and Spirit, the Truth and Power, back together to experience all that God intended for the Church to be.

Wise Guys



Where have all the fathers gone? Not fathers in the sense of the fathers of children, but the wise, older ones – venerable elders in the faith. It is interesting that the **last prophecy**, before the **400 year intertestamental silence** of God, dealt with sharing wisdom.

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 6 And **he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers**, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Granted, this seems like an odd way to end the Old Testament. Certainly the relationship of **fathers to children**, and vice versa is important. Much can be said about fathers being proper leaders, the priests and heads of their households, and societal damage of broken fatherless homes, and so forth. *But, really!* Is it that important in the scheme of spiritual things? What a **strange** way to begin 400 years of silence.

But, as is often the case in God's Word there is something way more being said here. "*The heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*" deals **with heartfelt concern of the older and wiser to share the God's Truth with the younger, and a desire of the younger to hear and accept the Truth shared by the venerable older Christian leaders.**

In fact, "*father*" in scripture is often a metaphor for **wise men of God**, whereas "*children*" are often those who refuse the Truth and go astray, especially those who rebel and are disobedient.

Interestingly, Dr. Luke quotes this prophecy in his announcement of John the Baptist coming in the spirit of Elijah; however, he renders the second phrase as "*the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*". Children are equated to the "*disobedient*"; fathers equates to the "*just*," moreover, "*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*"

Luke 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

As is so often the case in God's Word, Malachi's prophecy, I believe, has a **both near and far term implications**. The near term implication is, the Spirit of Elijah returning through **John the Baptist**; the long term, with **Elijah himself physically** returning before the Day of the Lord.

However, the Spirit of Elijah should be still active – if we would seek it. Elijah walked so closely with God that he was translated into heaven without tasting death. If ever disobedient **children need the wisdom of fathers** rightly related to God, it is now.

Yet we have grown callous to the children – the merely religious, the rebels, the scoffers, the mockers, the disrespectful, and the flagrant disrespect of God's word. It is **easier to live in our religious bubble**, then to share with the disobedient. Moreover, many of **our would-be elders, lack the true wisdom** of Elijah.

Apparently, this was true in Malachi's day. He was **warning Israel to repent and turn back to God**. It was the "*fathers*" who had allowed Israel to drift from God as they failed to seek Him with their whole heart. These were **leaders who were not properly leading**. As a result, they had nothing of spiritual value to share. We see this same scenario in America today.

The world defines wisdom as '*the experienced application of knowledge.*' The Bible defines **wisdom** as '*Jesus Christ.*' It is in Jesus and Him alone, that we find wisdom and life. Proverbs 8 makes this abundantly clear as it describes "*wisdom*" in terms of a preincarnate Jesus Christ. Take Ecclesiastes for example, substitute '*Jesus*' for '*wisdom*' and see if it becomes clear:

Ecclesiastes 7:12 For wisdom is a defense ... but the excellency of knowledge is, that **wisdom** [Jesus] *giveth life* to them that have it.

Then, as now, part of the problem is that **we lack wise men**, especially, *wise older men*. What a sad statement. But, it is empirically true. I am astounded with the ignorance of God and absence of wisdom in so many older men. **Children are rebelling from silly older men who proclaim false truth or merely promote a form of religion**. They are **looking for** Power and Truth – the **real thing**.

The **older are to still to** "*flourish in the courts of our God,*" "*bring forth fruit in old age,*" and be "*sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith.*"

Psalms 92:14 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still **bring forth fruit in old age** ...

Titus 2:2-3 **Aged men** [should] be sober, grave, temperate, **sound in faith**, in charity, in patience. ...

Psalm 71:9 Cast me not off in the **time of old age**; forsake me not when my strength faileth ...

Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and **now am old**; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread

Sadly, few of our aged men can offer this – many have only confused **doctrine**, a form of **religion**, and thinly veiled excuses for the absence of God and Power in their lives to share. Far too many have wasted their lives not seeking God in earnest and failing to test all things to His word.

Scripturally, the **elders**, the older men, were to be the ones filled with God's wisdom after a life of walking closely with God. Where were they then? Where are they now?

Proverbs 19:20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be **wise in thy latter end**.

This is not meant to be a blanket indictment. Certainly, there are many older men who have grown in the Lord into wise, venerable counselors – **true elders**. However, far too many of our matured men and women are nothing more than "*clouds and wind without rain*".

They have played church for decades, rather than seeking God in "*Spirit and Truth*". Now they reach the later days of their lives, a season when they should be filled with Godly wisdom, with only a vague semblance of God's power in their lives. How utterly sad! This is clearly more **Old Tradition** robbing the church of power.

I have said many times, we should be seeking God for why we lack the Power He clearly promised. It is time to stop making excuses. We should **be asking God to pull us up to the experience of His Word**, rather than pulling the Word down to our pathetic level of experience.

If I had a word of advice regarding a worthy purpose for your life, it is this. Seek to walk with the Lord in such a way that by the end of your life you have wisdom to share – **true wisdom**; that is **found only in a true relationship with Jesus Christ**.

If you do, you will have Jesus to share in Power. By your later days you should be so close to Jesus that you are a channel of Him and His wisdom for others to follow. Be a wise guy!

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

