

Commentary — From the Margins

Consumed By Fire

[The house of Israel's] priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I [God] am profaned among them. Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, "Thus says the Lord God," when the Lord has not spoken. The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice. And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God. (Ezek 22:26-31)

The author of Hebrews writes, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8).

John writes, "In the beginning was the [*Logos*], and the [*Logos*] was with [*Theon*], and the [*Logos*] was [*Theos*]. ... All things were made through him [the *Logos*], and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ... And the [*Logos*] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:1, 3-4, 14). The world did not know the *Logos*, the beginning and the end of all things (Rev 22:13), the God whom the creation concealed by its sense of being eternal (Eccl 3:11). The *Logos* came to His own people (John 1:11) as His only Son (John 3:16), but His people did not receive Him. For the false prophets of Israel had made no distinction between unclean and clean—the common and the holy—thereby blinding themselves to the coming of their Messiah as the prophesied son of David. The *Logos* came as His only Son and He became the only Son of the Father. In this, He remains the same today as He was yesterday when He was the only deity the natural nation of Israel knew, the God who poured out His indignation upon Israel to consume the nation with the fire of His wrath as He returned that nation's ways upon its heads.

Yes, the harsh Old Testament God from which Evangelical Christendom flees is the deity that is now the glorified Jesus Christ. Disciples are covered by His righteousness, put on as a garment. And all who practice lawlessness bet with their lives that He is not now the same as He was yesterday.

By the middle of the 1st-Century CE, Christianity had already become an evolving belief paradigm that was rejecting its Hebraic roots and the practices of early Jewish disciples: there is no serious dispute among scholars that the early Church was Jewish in practices and beliefs. But the epistles of Paul, used by Evangelical Church as Peter warned against (2 Pet 3:16-17), have been appropriated by lawless disciples to wring obedience from disciples as if obedience to God were dirty dishwater. These disciples are only now “dampened” by obedience from practicing all forms of ungodliness and unrestrained sin.

Righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness: disciples who are the righteous will do what is right (Rev 22:11) as they are the holy ones of God, a royal priesthood, and a people for God’s own possession (1 Pet 2:9). They are those who will, today, stand in the breach between God and the lawlessness of Israel, now a nation circumcised of heart.

According to Jesus, none of Israel kept the law Moses had given them (John 7:19); no one in Israel stood in the breach between righteousness and unrighteousness other than John the Baptist to make straight the way to God. None sighed and cried about the abominations committed in Israel except John, a type of the Elijah to come, the Elijah who will restore all things. And of men born of women, none was greater than John; yet the least of those born of Spirit would be greater than John, for the person twice born is inwardly no longer in bondage to sin and death but free to keep the laws of God.

The arguments against keeping the commandments, especially the Sabbath, all come down to a simple assumption: the Christian Church as the Body of Christ will not die. After all, did not Jesus say to Peter, “I tell you, you are Peter [Πέτρος], and on this rock [πέτρα] I will build my church, and the gates of hell [ᾗδου] shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18)? But does not Paul say, “We know that our old self [man] was crucified with him [Christ] in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6) — and if crucified with Christ, the spiritual Body of Christ, like His physical body, with die from loss of breath, in this case loss of the Holy Spirit [Πνευμα Ἅγιον], the divine Breath of God. The assumption behind all arguments against keeping the commandments and the practices of Judaism [i.e., walking as Jesus walked – 1 John 2:6] requires that spiritually crucified disciples composing the Church not die but remain alive on the cross for two millennia; that the Church not lose the divine Breath of God, the means by which it lives. This assumption requires those who hold it to believe that Jesus’ physical body was not a type of His spiritual Body; yet within the realm of figurative language, the metaphor of the Church being the Body of Christ does not work unless the spiritual Body is united with Jesus “in a resurrection like his” (Rom 6:5). And if it is united with Jesus in a resurrection like His, it must necessarily die as His physical body died; must be buried in the heart of the earth for three days as His physical body was buried; then it must be resurrected after the third day, with this *third day* being the third day of the “P” creation account.

The gates of Hades did not prevail against Jesus’ physical body which saw no corruption occurring during the three days and three nights which it lay dead in

the Garden Tomb. Likewise, Jesus' spiritual Body will see no corruption during the time that it is dead, for the last Elijah will restore all things, including life to the Body. The gates of Hades will not prevail against this spiritual Body that, today, remains in darkness, a lifeless corpse awaiting empowerment by the Holy Spirit and liberation from indwelling sin and death at the second Passover.

The gates of Hades did not prevail over natural Israel when God consumed this nation in His wrath; for after seventy years, a remnant of Israel returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of God. Likewise, a remnant of the spiritual nation would return from spiritual Babylon to rebuild the house of God on the foundation Paul laid.

If Peter is the rock upon which Jesus built His church, then it must be acknowledged that Peter *followed Jesus* (v. 19) into death, for the Apostle Peter died. He did not leave to others his commission to feed and tend the sheep (John 21:15-19): in his epistles, Peter feeds the lambs (1 Pet 1:1-4:19), tends the sheep (1 Pet 5:1-14), and feeds the sheep (2 Pet all). He did not leave his commission to others for the crucified Body was quickly losing the divine Breath of God; it was dying from entrenched lawlessness among Hellenists, and from fomenting rebellion against Rome within Judean Judaism. ... If the Body of Christ did not, or does not die, but rather has remained alive for the past two millennia, there would be no need for the last Elijah to restore all things (Matt 17:11). John the Baptist did not restore all things. He did not turn the hearts of the children to the Father (Mal 4:6); he did not “turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just” (Luke 1:17), the spiritual expression of turning the hearts of children to the Father. He did not even lay the foundation for the spiritual house of God: the Apostle Paul lays this foundation (1 Co 3:10-11), which is Christ Jesus. And Paul is not the *Zerubbabel* whose hands laid the foundation and whose hands shall complete the house. Christ Jesus is this *Zerubbabel* as He is the last Elijah, who will restore all things. And if Christ must restore that which has been lost, then the self-identified Body of Christ that is today's visible Christian Church—which is not one Body, but a logjam of splinters and slivers, schisms and skeptics—is not spiritually alive, but is very dead.

“Dead” is an English word that exists as an absolute. Some thing or some entity is either alive, or it is dead; it is not partially dead, or mostly dead, or even *very* dead. It either has life within it, thereby making it alive, or it is has no life dwelling within it, thereby causing it to be dead. And herein is the problem Christendom faces, for as the “assembly” of God [i.e., the Most High's Church – ἐκκλησίαν] the Church is dead: no *assembly* exists as an assembly. But there remains an individual here and one there in fellowships of two and three that have the Holy Spirit, and remain obedient to God. Thus, Jesus saying, “Again I say to you [His disciples], if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt 18:19-20), seems prophetic, and accurately describes the state of His spiritual Body prior to the [second Passover](#) resurrection of *the assembly* to life through filling (or empowering) Israel with the Holy Spirit.

In every generation, a person here and one there sought to obey God, thus undertaking a journey of faith equivalent in length to the patriarch Abraham's physical journey from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan, the Promised Land that is God's rest (from Ps 95:10-11). The disciple who was a slave and whose physical body was not free to obey God could nevertheless mentally obey ... just as an Israelite in Egypt was not free to keep the Sabbath, but had his or her transgressions covered by being in bondage to Pharaoh and was, thus, under natural grace (Rom 5:13), the disciple whose fleshly body is in bondage to sin as a son of disobedience has his [or her] transgressions of the commandments covered by Grace, with this covering extending until the law of God is written on the heart and placed in the mind. Then, not before, spiritual death will come to the disciple from any transgression of the commandments. Then, not before, the covenant God made with His firstborn son (Ex 4:22) on the day when He took this nation by the hand to lead its forefathers out from Egypt will end. Then, not before, the new covenant will be implemented. Then, not before, the covenants of promise initially mediated by Moses will bring forth living sacrifices acceptable to God, sacrifices that are not conformed to this world but transformed by the renewal of minds and hearts (Rom 12:1-2), sacrifices who will die physically but will live spiritually. And every lawless disciple who today claims to be under the new covenant neither understands what the new covenant is, nor wants to be judged by this covenant which will have God no longer remembering the sins of disciples because the laws of God within the disciple will either condemn or exonerate the disciple. If these laws are broken, the disciple will condemn him or herself to the second death; if they are obeyed, the disciple will have this known when judgments are revealed upon Christ Jesus' return as the Messiah (1 Co 4:5). Either way, those disciples who have done good will be resurrected to life whereas those who have done evil will be condemned in their resurrection.

It is not the disciple who seeks to obey God that *does not know Jesus*, the epitaph hurled by the lawless against the obedient, but it is the lawless who do not understand the change that will occur within their minds and hearts when they have truly been born of Spirit that do not know Christ; for the carnal or natural mind is hostile to God and will not and really cannot keep the commandments (Rom 8:7). The person who has not been drawn by God from this world (John 6:44) but who nevertheless seeks God and seeks a relationship with Christ must—yes, must!—break at least one of the commandments, for to break one causes the person to break the commandments (Jas 2:10). This person, regardless of his or her intentions, remains a son of disobedience; this person remains in bondage to disobedience. Sin continues to have dominion over his person. Thus, the best the person can do is to break what the person regards as the least of the commandments, which for Gentiles is usually the Sabbath commandment, but as seen within Sabbatarian fellowships of physically circumcised and uncircumcised Israelites can be the commandment against coveting (Rom 7:7). Regardless, though, of which one of the commandments is broken, the person remains a bondservant of sin, albeit a pious sinner.

Historically, the evolution of Christendom makes apparent the spiritual weakening of the Body of Christ through loss of the Holy Spirit, and even reveals the death of the Body. Early disciples believed “they were the true eschatological remnant of Israel” [from an on-line paper by Robert D. Brinsmead, titled “Sabbatarianism Re-examined”]. These early disciples did not repudiate their Jewish heritage, but rather, “saw Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism, not its negation” [same cite]. They were of the newly formed synagogue created when Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit [πνεῦμα ἅγιον]” (John 20:22). They had already been chosen by the Father (John 17:6), and when Jesus breathed on them, they received the directly transferred Breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ]. And this synagogue of Believers is the only *assembly* that then formed the Body of Christ. There was no other *assembly* established by Jesus on Peter.

Because the Body of Christ is not many bodies but one only, every *assembly* of disciples in whatever city must be part of the one synagogue Jesus established when He breathed on ten of His first disciples. There can be no other synagogue or congregation of spiritually circumcised Israel that is the *assembly* that Jesus establishes through or on Peter. Therefore, when this *assembly* is visibly no more, the Body of Christ is dead and buried in the heart of the earth, not to be resurrected until after the third day.

One of the most grievous theological errors a person can commit is to interpret the gospels through the epistles; for salvation does not depend upon Paul or upon Peter or John, but upon Christ Jesus, whose words are heard in the gospels. The epistles are to be interpreted through the gospels. Even the logic of a child will not have the child use a letter from a brother to interpret the words of his or her father—and Jesus spoke only the Father’s words. To hear Jesus’ words is to hear the One who sent Him. To hear Jesus’ words and to believe the One who sent Him causes the person to pass from death to life (John 5:24). Paul, who laid the foundation of the house of God, with this foundation being Christ Jesus, also heard the words of Jesus and believed the One who sent Him—and if Paul expresses these words in a manner that is difficult to understand, Peter’s claim (2 Pet 3:15-16), and in a manner which the lawless can twist to their destruction, then it is back to the gospels that the disciple will go to read for him or herself Jesus’ words expressed as they were recorded by very good scribes.

The one who would teach Israel to interpret the gospels through the epistles is of the hated son, Esau, who, today, struggles in the womb of Grace with the loved son, Jacob, with both sons of promise to be “born” before Zion experiences the hard labor pain of childbirth (*cf.* Rom 9:10-13; Isa 66:7-8). This person who would teach Israel truly lacks spiritual understanding, regardless of the person’s command of koine Greek and knowledge of history. This is a person who has not been born of Spirit as evidenced by the person’s inability to keep the commandments, which for this person is an odious form of *legalism*. And those who will be taught by this person display hostility toward God, who once winked at Israel’s spiritual ignorance but now seeks a man to stand in the breach, making straight the way to God. If no such man is found—one will be in the last

Elijah—then God would consume spiritually circumcised Israel in the lake of fire, the second death.

The fate of every disciple is dependent upon the attitude of the disciple toward the commandments of God, which cannot be perfectly kept as long as sin and death continue to dwell in the fleshy members of disciples. The covering of Grace is necessary until the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26-30) as in “made naked,” with this event that begins the seven endtime years of tribulation coming through the liberation of Israel by this nation being filled with the Holy Spirit in a manner foreshadowed by the *assembly’s* baptism by Spirit on that day of Pentecost following Calvary. ... The one *assembly* on that day of Pentecost is a shadow and type of the Christian Church on the day of the [second Passover](#), when God again gives the lives of men as ransom for Israel (Isa 43:3-4).

When the Son of Man is revealed, both Head and Body will be covered only by its obedience. The person who has urged that the gospels be interpreted through the epistles will either keep the commandments or will become part of the great falling away (2 Thess 2:3), over which God will send a great delusion so that these disciples cannot repent (*vv.* 10-12). These disciples will be so thoroughly convinced by this great delusion that they are theologically correct that they will slay their righteous brothers as Cain slew Abel. They will think they do God a favor, but all they will do is mark themselves for death in the lake of fire. And there is nothing anyone can do or say even today to dissuade them of the course of action to which they have committed themselves; for they are now vessels of wrath endured for a season—they are vessels intended for dishonorable use, vessels of destruction.

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