

# Truth For The Final Generation

## Chapter 13

### The True Gospel of Jesus the Messiah

## What Shall We Do Then?

#### Scripture Reading: Luke 3: 7-14 (KJV)

<sup>7</sup> Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. <sup>9</sup> And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. <sup>10</sup> And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? <sup>11</sup> He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. <sup>12</sup> Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? <sup>13</sup> And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. <sup>14</sup> And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

Some pertinent questions face us as a church as it did the Jews who heard John's preaching by the banks of Jordan, hence our topic. For us this question comes in the light of the return of the preaching of the 1888 message of Righteousness by Faith, and the question we must likewise ask is, "What shall we do then?" This question back in John's time was in response to the preaching of the message of repentance for the preparation of the way of Messiah's first advent. "4As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough way shall be made smooth. 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." **Luke 3:4-6**

The imagery of prepare the way; make paths straight; every valley filled and every mountain and hill brought low; and crooked ways straight and rough way smooth, is reminiscent of olden days when a king was visiting some distant part of his kingdom. Back then careful preparation was made that the king's journey should be without incident and discomfort as he travelled. Quite recently in our country we witnessed a similar situation of the sprucing up of highways around Bridgetown where a member of the British Royal family was to pass in commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Queen's coronation. But in the passage before us a more fundamental and spiritual situation is spoken of, it is the preparation for the King of the Universe coming to the earth as a babe at His first advent. Like the kings of old who had heralds going before them announcing their arrival, the King of the Universe also had a herald going before Him announcing His arrival. "41 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching

in the wilderness of Judea, 2 And saying Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **Matthew 3: 1-3.**

In preparation for the setup of the "kingdom of heaven" at the first advent a message of repentance was proclaimed. Only those who accepted and responded to this message were part of the kingdom at that time. Note John's words in **Matt. 3:2**, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and also in **Luke 3:8**, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." In order to receive Messiah at his first advent, repentance was to be experience and the attendant fruits of repentance were to be produced by the populace. John in response to the people's inquiry of "what shall we do" clearly spelt out the terms of repentance, which terms are still relevant today even as the "John's of today prepare the way for the second coming of Our Lord.

Let us analyse the terms which John pointed out to the people for the reception of the Messiah at His first advent, which terms are also to be spelt out for the preparation of His second coming as King of kings and Lord of lords:

1. He that hath two coats impart to him that hath none – **Isaiab 58:7**
2. He that hath meat, let him do likewise – **Isaiab 58:10**
3. Exact no more than that which is appointed you – be honest, don't overcharge
4. Do violence to no man – physically or emotionally, but rather be caring
5. Neither accuse any falsely – do not lie on one another
6. Be content with your wages. – do not be avaricious

Is there a message contained in John's words that is applicable for us today? Most assuredly! In all of the above terms there is one thread that runs through them binding them all together, it is the most powerful force in all God's universe, it is the power that conquers all things, all persons, all opposing ideologies, it is the power of the agape LOVE of God. This love is found in God and also in the bosom of those wherein God dwells. **1 John 4: 7-12**, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. <sup>8</sup> He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through

him. <sup>10</sup> Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. This passage of scripture is required reading for every one of us every day, and it should be dwelt upon long and hard until being fully surrender it becomes our reality.

This is the message that we have been given in a direct way thirty years ago in the form of "The Character of God Message." After these many years what has that message wrought in us? Have we allowed it to bring forth in us fruits meet for repentance, fruits that will prepare the way for the Lord's Second Advent? "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. **COL 69.**

Note two points in John's discourse: 1. Do violence to no man, and 2. Neither accuse any falsely. We are not only to desist from physical violence, but we must include here emotional as well as reputational violence. John as the herald of Messiah's first advent is proclaiming the said message Messiah would proclaim, but Messiah will proclaim it with more power and clarity even as "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." At this time a similar message which John gave at the time of the first advent will be given by the "Johns" heralding the Second Advent. A message that "shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," which is a message/ministry of reconciliation which we have been given. <sup>18</sup> And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." **2 Cor. 5:18, 19.**

This word of reconciliation committed unto us is not merely for those who do not know or have not accepted the claims of God on them, but verily for those also of the household of faith who are estranged from each other while claiming to believe the same wonderful and powerful message of the character of God, which is a message of healing, of reconciliation. Such estrangement is an indictment on us who claim to be heralds of Messiah's Second Advent even as John was of Messiah's first advent. Like the various groupings in John's day, asking "what shall we do?" I answer like John, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." A signal evidence of "fruits meet for repentance" is reconciliation which hath been committed unto us. A reconciliation in which Agape Love is the hallmark, and does not impute i.e. attribute the wrong done to us by another unto them, but rather accept the wrong done to us for Christ and the gospel's sake.

Bear in mind that the message of God's character, our fundamental and distinctive teaching, teaches us that, "God is in no wise responsible for sin, or any of its consequences," even that of division and separation that comes in and has come in among His people. But rather, in Messiah he has reconciled us to Himself, and today He is working for reconciliation between brother and brother in the body of His dear Son. As His children can we do less than our Father for reconciliation in the body of His dear Son?

Consider with me then, a story in Joshua 22, which though in scripture, is not well known to many, but is instructive in the principles of bringing about genuine reconciliation and forestalls and redresses divisions/separations among God's people.

**Joshua 22:10-34, (NLT)** <sup>10</sup> But while they were still in Canaan, and when they came to a place called Geliloth near the Jordan River, the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh stopped to build a large and imposing altar. <sup>11</sup> The rest of Israel heard that the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar at Geliloth at the edge of the land of Canaan, on the west side of the Jordan River. <sup>12</sup> So the whole community of Israel gathered at Shiloh and prepared to go to war against them. <sup>13</sup> First, however, they sent a delegation led by Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to talk with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. <sup>14</sup> In this delegation were ten leaders of Israel, one from each of the ten tribes, and each the head of his family within the clans of Israel. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived in the land of Gilead, they said to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, <sup>16</sup> "The whole community of the LORD **demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel. How could you turn away from the LORD and build an altar for yourselves in rebellion against him?** <sup>17</sup> Was our sin at Peor not enough? To this day we are not fully cleansed of it, even after the plague that struck the entire community of the LORD. <sup>18</sup> And yet today you are turning away from following the LORD. If you rebel against the LORD **today, he will be angry with all of us tomorrow.** <sup>19</sup> "If you need the altar because the land you possess is defiled, then join us in the LORD's land, where the Tabernacle of the LORD **is situated, and share our land with us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar other than the one true altar of the LORD our God.** <sup>20</sup> Didn't divine anger fall on the entire community of Israel when Achan, a member of the clan of Zerah, sinned by stealing the things set apart for the LORD? He was not the only one who died because of his sin." <sup>21</sup> Then the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the clans of Israel: <sup>22</sup> "The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! The LORD, the Mighty One, is God! He knows the truth, and may Israel know it, too! We have not built the altar in treacherous rebellion against the LORD. If we have done so, do not spare our lives this day. <sup>23</sup> If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn away from

the LORD **or to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings, may the LORD himself punish us.**

<sup>24</sup> “The truth is, we have built this altar because we fear that in the future your descendants will say to ours, ‘What right do you have to worship the LORD, the God of Israel?’ <sup>25</sup> The LORD **has placed the Jordan River as a barrier between our people and you people of Reuben and Gad. You have no claim to the LORD.**’ So your descendants may prevent our descendants from worshipping the LORD. <sup>26</sup> “So we decided to build the altar, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, <sup>27</sup> but as a memorial. It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the LORD **at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours,** ‘You have no claim to the LORD.’ <sup>28</sup> “If they say this, our descendants can reply, ‘Look at this copy of the LORD’s altar that our ancestors made. It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices; it is a reminder of the relationship both of us have with the LORD.’ <sup>29</sup> Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD or turn away from him by building our own altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings, or sacrifices. Only the altar of the LORD **our God that stands in front of the Tabernacle may be used for that purpose.**” <sup>30</sup> When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of Israel—heard this from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, they were satisfied. <sup>31</sup> Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, replied to them, “Today we know the LORD **is among us because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD as we thought. Instead, you have rescued Israel from being destroyed by the hand of the LORD.**” <sup>32</sup> Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the other leaders left the tribes of Reuben and Gad in Gilead and returned to the land of Canaan to tell the Israelites what had happened. <sup>33</sup> And all the Israelites were satisfied and praised God and spoke no more of war against Reuben and Gad. <sup>34</sup> The people of Reuben and Gad named the altar “Witness,” for they said, “It is a witness between us and them that the LORD **is our God, too.**”

Let us take a closer look at the development and outcome of this story, and see what lessons God wants to teach us in this end time work of His. In this story some principles were violated, but adherence to major principles led to reconciliation. Let us first examine the violations:

1. Building a large and imposing altar without letting their brethren know. This was a lack of communication and transparency. This is a major problem in most relationships. While one has the best interest of the family/group/church at heart not communicating or communicating piece meal or worse still not being transparent which very often is due to a lack of trust of others. *Patriarchs and Prophets (PP) 518*, “The two and a half tribes had been at fault in entering, without explanation, upon an act open to such grave suspicions.” *PP 519*, “How

often serious difficulties arise from a simple misunderstanding, even among those who are actuated by the worthiest motives; and without the exercise of courtesy and forbearance, what serious and even fatal results may follow.” *Mount of Blessing p. 68* “Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Yet it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth. We cannot speak the truth unless we know the truth; and how often preconceived opinions, mental bias, imperfect knowledge, errors of judgment, prevent a right understanding of matters with which we have to do!” *Matt. 5:37*, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil,” and *James 5:12*, “... but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

2. Prepared for war. Being angry and feeling affronted and ignored for not being informed or being honestly dealt with, even under the pretext that God has been betrayed and even rebelled against. Many a trial could be avoided if only we would remember that God’s character of love does not “render evil for evil” but in humility go to the offender(s) and seek to be reconciled. *Australian Union Conference Recorder (AUCR) April, 15, 1903* “I entreat the members of our churches not to make the work more trying than it necessarily is by watching one another for a word or an act upon which to comment unfavourably... Without delay make every effort to heal the wrong that exists.
3. Accusation. “The whole community of the LORD **demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel.**” This seems to be a most noble gesture since God’s honour seems to be uppermost in the minds of Israel. But accusation of any kind is not noble, it is still the work of Satan the accuser of the brethren. “How much of evil would be averted, if all, when falsely accused, would avoid recrimination, and in its stead employ mild, conciliating words.” *2BC p. 999*

After all the preparations for war was done by those who had “God’s best interest at heart,” that which should be done first was done at the last averting serious bloodshed. A delegation of leaders was convened. “... A delegation led by Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to talk with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. In this delegation were ten leaders of Israel, one from each of the ten tribes, and each the head of his family within the clans of Israel.” *Joshua 22:13, 14*. This is very instructive in that those who

are the recognized leaders of God's people are the one who must take the lead on behalf of the congregation in matters of grave concerns. Also notice "each the head of his family." These men were family men who understand what it means to bear burdens in and for the family, and sometimes even opposition. Therefore such leaders must be tried and proved, and like Paul says in **1 Tim. 3:4-6**, <sup>4</sup> "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; <sup>5</sup> (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) <sup>6</sup> Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Though in the wrong and recognizing it, the children of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh humble themselves at the inquiry of the men of Israel. "The whole community of the LORD demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel. How could you turn away from the LORD and build an altar for yourselves in rebellion against him?" Note that the two and half tribes though moving with high motives were at fault for not being as transparent as they could be in this important matter. **Patriarchs and Prophets (PP) 518**, "The two and a half tribes had been at fault in entering, without explanation, upon an act open to such grave suspicions." In the words of Paul in **Rom. 14:16**, "Let not then your good be evil spoken of:"

At last humbling of hearts leading to reconciliation won out and the people of God were reunited, and all hostilities ceased. **Joshua 22:30-34**, <sup>30</sup> When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of Israel—heard this from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, they were satisfied. <sup>31</sup> Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, replied to them, "Today we know the LORD is among us because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD as we thought. Instead, you have rescued Israel from being destroyed by the hand of the LORD." <sup>32</sup> Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the other leaders left the tribes of Reuben and Gad in Gilead and returned to the land of Canaan to tell the Israelites what had happened. <sup>33</sup> And all the Israelites were satisfied and praised God and spoke no more of war against Reuben and Gad. <sup>34</sup> The people of Reuben and Gad named the altar "Witness," for they said, "It is a witness between us and them that the LORD is our God, too."

When will a delegation of God's people be convened with humbling of hearts bringing forth the fruits of repentance leading to reconciliation and the cessation of hostilities between us and those others who claim to believe the last message, which according to **Christ Object Lessons p. 614** is, "a revelation of His character of love?" If this message is not allowed to reconcile us one to another, how can we then be entrusted with it to reconcile men to God? God has once more extended His hand toward us in bringing more prominently to us the attractions of Jesus, which attractions are seen in Him giving himself for humanity. This meant that He was willing not to return from the second death if we would be rescued from that death. Therefore

this message is more than theory, it is practical to the laying down of our lives for the brethren, even as He did for us his brethren. Such is the only outcome of the last message of mercy.

### Closing thoughts

"One of Christ's last commands to His disciples was "Love one another as I have loved you." John 13:34. Do we obey this command, or are we indulging sharp, unchristlike traits of character? If we have in any way grieved or wounded others, it is our duty to confess our fault and seek for reconciliation. This is an essential preparation that we may come before God in faith, to ask His blessing." **COL 144**

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He died to make an atonement, and to become a pattern for everyone who would be his disciple. Shall selfishness come into your hearts? And will those who set not before them the pattern, Jesus, extol your merits? You have none except as they come through Jesus Christ. Shall pride be harboured after you have seen Deity humbling himself, and then as man debasing himself, till there was no lower point to which he could descend? "Be astonished, O ye heavens," and be amazed, ye inhabitants of the earth, that such returns should be made to our Lord! What contempt! What wickedness! What formality! What pride! What efforts made to lift up man and glorify self, when the Lord of glory humbled himself, agonized, and died the shameful death upon the cross in our behalf!

Who is learning the meekness and lowliness of the Pattern? Who is striving earnestly to master self? Who is lifting his cross and following Jesus? Who is wrestling against self-conceit? Who [is] setting himself in good earnest[ness] and with all his energies to overcome satanic envyings, jealousies, evil-surmisings, and lasciviousness; cleansing the soul temple from all defilements, and opening the door of the heart for Jesus to come in? ... All haughtiness, all self exaltation must be put away from us, and we learn the meekness and lowliness of Christ, or we shall find no place in the kingdom of God. The life must be hid with Christ in God. The anchor of every soul is to be cast into the Rock cleft for us that Rock which bears up a ruined world. Let us keep these things in our minds.

Pride of talent, pride of intellect, cannot exist in hearts that are hid with Christ in God ... All contentions, all envy, is grievous to Jesus Christ. **Review and Herald, July 5, 1887.**

Yours in the true Gospel of the Messiah  
Elder W. Austin Greaves  
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