

## Acknowledgement of God

"But woe to the Earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short."<sup>1</sup> At least Satan knows that his time is short, but unfortunately for the people of God, God can only say, "...My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

The ignorance we display concerning the amount of time left for us is what puts us in danger of suffering the fate of Jerusalem as it did in AD70 when these dreadful words of Jesus were fulfilled: "The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you."<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, all who fail to recognise the time of Christ our God's coming will suffer dreadful times of 'destruction.' What is 'destruction'? It is not just dying, for all who are in Christ are alive to God. The destruction is the destroying of that which we have valued and devoted our time to, which is wickedness in the eyes of God.

Be reminded... there is good and evil, and there is wickedness and the wicked. They are similar but not the same. Good and evil existed from the beginning because they were known by God as God Himself said, "The man has now become like one of Us, knowing good and evil."<sup>4</sup> It is just that God has chosen to be good over evil so that everything about Him and everything that He does is good. And God's definition of wickedness as He stated in Jeremiah 1.16 is this: "I will pronounce My judgments on My people because of their wickedness in forsaking Me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshipping what their hands have made."

Now you cannot forsake what you do not know, so pagans and heathens who do not know Christ and His Father cannot forsake Them... and by God's definition, they are not wicked. Rather, it is God's people – His own household, even His own children – who can forsake Him, and so wickedness belongs to God's own household if we are to understand and define what true wickedness is. Good and evil are independent of wickedness, for you can be doing good and still be wicked, and you may be doing something that is evil but yet are not wicked. You are of sufficient maturity now, elect, to understand this so that you may learn to judge and decide more accurately on what is good and evil, and what is wicked and righteous.

The knowledge of good and evil came to us through Adam's eating of the tree... but it was always in God's plan that we would come to have the knowledge of good and evil... for since He made us in His image, then the fullness of that image must include a knowledge of good and evil as He has the knowledge of good and evil.

The biggest error we made and we have kept making from the day Adam ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil is getting God's timing wrong. It would have been alright for Adam if it was God who gave him the fruit, not Eve, but then God would have given Adam the fruit only after Adam had eaten from the Tree of Life. So you see, elect, to acquire the knowledge of the set times of God is also to see the order of God... the order in which to do things and say things so that order is maintained.

You see, and be reminded that even Satan was blameless in his ways until, as God said, "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you."<sup>5</sup> It was when Satan forsook God's will for him that he fell. It was wickedness which was the cause in him, not evil or good. For indeed it should not surprise you to know that Satan has the knowledge of good and evil as well, but that he chooses and delights in doing evil rather than good, lies instead of truth, taking life (murder) instead of giving life. When evil fails, Satan will not hesitate to inspire you to do good works so that you would be wicked (forsaking God).

The classic example is Judas Iscariot's comments about Mary who took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. Judas Iscariot objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."<sup>6</sup> What Mary did was perfect and appropriate for the time, but seemed wasteful... almost 'evil.'

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 12.12

<sup>2</sup> Hosea 4.6

<sup>3</sup> Luke 19.43-44

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3.22

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel 28.15

<sup>6</sup> John 12.3, 5

And what Judas said seemed good, but was wicked because it forsook the need of Jesus at that time. The real need in the few days leading up to His crucifixion was for His disciples to recognise the 'seven' thing they were living in. It was the last seven – last week – before Jesus would be killed. It was not the time to set up charitable trust funds. It was the time to help the Lord in His preparation.

Now look at Acts 15.28-29 and see what they wrote – **It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality** – in their letter to the gentiles as the council adopted James the Younger's good recommendations. Good, yes... for it is good to avoid sexual immorality... but the very commendations of James were wicked. Wicked because they forsook all the teachings and words of Jesus and so from that day, wickedness was formalised in the church of Jesus Christ. Formalised because these recommendations were adopted and held to be more important than the teachings of Jesus Christ Himself. Anyone who chooses to listen to James over the teachings of Jesus has forsaken Christ and indeed, though he may be doing good, the good that he does is wickedness.

But what made James the Younger's recommendations – good recommendations – wicked? It was the timing. If James had gone to the gentiles before Jesus started His ministry and was evangelising the gentiles with the Law of Moses, then he would have been righteous, for the old was still valid. However, with the establishment and the validity of the New Covenant through Jesus Christ, the old was now obsolete – wrong timing. It should not surprise you that James the Younger, the half brother of Jesus, would get the timing wrong. For even the mother got the timing wrong with Jesus when she told Him to do something about the lack of wine in the wedding at Cana. Jesus had to say to her, **"Dear woman, why do you involve Me? My time has not yet come."**<sup>7</sup> And James had already demonstrated in John 7 that he had no idea as to the right time with Jesus when he and the other brothers said to Jesus, **"You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that Your disciples may see the miracles you do,"** to which Jesus replied, **"The right time for Me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the feast, because for Me the right time has not yet come."**<sup>8</sup> Good suggestions but wrong timing. However, what the mother and brothers said in John 2 and 7 were not wicked... just ignorant, that is, lacking knowledge.

What James did later in Acts 15 is very different... for by then (remember Acts 15 is a few years or decades into the establishment of the church) it should have been obvious that Jesus' teachings are very, very, very different from Moses'... especially in the presence of someone like Paul. If the proper practice of the teachings of Jesus was compatible with the teachings of Moses, then Paul would not have gone around killing and imprisoning the early members of the Way while he was still Saul. The early persecutions of his forebears by the Jewish pharisees should have told James that Moses' and Jesus' words cannot be practised together. The mixing of two incompatibles is not good. If it is not good, then it is evil. Only the ignorant mix two incompatible systems, and those who are ignorant are those who lack knowledge. Ignorance is the absence of knowledge, not intelligence. So it should not surprise you, elect, to find that the intelligent can be more ignorant than those of lesser intelligence. So when God said, **"...My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge,"** it means our ignorance of God's ways are responsible for our destruction.

**Ignorance of the lack of knowledge of something that you should know comes from one source only – laziness. Too lazy to find out for yourself what Jesus said.** Too lazy to listen but busy with your own plans and ideas. You see, busyness does not mean you are not lazy in God's eyes... for it is when you strive and make every effort to come to know what you ought to know that you have spent your time wisely.

Since eternal life is given to all who believe so that they may come to know God and Jesus Christ whom God sent, then every effort to come to more of the knowing of God is profitable and rewardable work, but all else is laziness.

The greatest ignorance we constantly display is the ignorance of God's timing for Himself and for us, and yet this is the most important. If in the days to come we are to avoid being destroyed like Jerusalem was destroyed, then it would be wise to know and recognise the time of God's coming.

Since wickedness is the forsaking of God, then your baptism of repentance from wickedness has been and must continue to be a turning back of your attention to God. For when you take your attention off someone or something, your forsaking has begun. That is why the restoration of the command to listen

<sup>7</sup> John 2.4

<sup>8</sup> John 7.3, 6-8

to Jesus was the start and is the start of the journey of repentance and the casting away of all wickedness. For it is when our attention is focussed back on knowing what Jesus said and did that we see what is truly right in God's eyes... and since God alone is good, then only what is right in God's eyes is also good. So as you have learned to listen to Jesus and learned to practise His words so that you may come to know Him and His Father, **now is the time to come to know Him not only in His way – in His words and works – but also in His times and see what is the right time by God.**

If at least you can rejoice that your time is short compared to the immensity of the work ahead, then you are at least as wise and cunning as Satan, who is at least wise and knowledgeable enough to know that his time is short. If Satan's time is short, then, elect, does it not stand to reason that our time is also short? So if this makes Satan furious, should it not make us joyful?

Now consider the words of Jesus when He had to rebuke the disciples again four days later at the house of Simon the leper because they were still bemoaning the waste of the nard: **"Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to Me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have Me."**<sup>9</sup>

So do not fear the days of distress and destruction that are here... for when you recognise the time of God, you will be spared.

Amen.

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<sup>9</sup> Mark 14.6-7