

Letter (Extract from Unpublished Letter)

Jude

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Another thing we have to take into account is, that wherever God sets up anything with which the responsibility of man is associated the first thing man does is to spoil it. Take, for instance, Adam in Eden. There we have man created innocent, and put under the test of obedience. He falls, and is driven out: that, in a moral sense, is a total end of him, though not of God's dealing in patience with him. Take again Noah after the flood. What is the first thing he does? The world had been put into his care, under his government, as we say, and one of the first things he did was to get drunk. Instead of influencing others for good he makes himself a disgrace, and brings a curse upon his children; upon Canaan and his posterity. Take again Israel in the wilderness. There I get the law -- another of God's dealings with man in responsibility -- and Moses coming down from the mount to find the people already sunk in idolatry! But enough has been said to show that the whole merit upon man's side is gone. The establishment of monarchy but confirmed this. When the house of David reigned, strange women took away their hearts; when Nebuchadnezzar reigned, the golden image was set up, the kingdom was taken from him, and the beast's heart was given to him. So that while we find God uniform in faithfulness, in patient mercy sustaining His people in trial, we find also the constant, uniform way of man is to upset that which God has set up. Nor, when we come to the Church, do we find it otherwise. Before the canon of Scripture closes the working of this principle is manifest. It is well to mark this. Without doing so it is impossible to walk with any knowledge of our position. The Church had already failed. Nevertheless God has gone on with it in faithfulness and longsuffering ever since. Just as with Israel. In the days of Isaiah we read, "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing," and so on; yet the predicted judgment was not fulfilled for eight hundred years. The Lord forbore with them, and even when there was no remedy He still went on with various testimonies to them by the prophets. The faithfulness of God is infallible; but if we apply this truth to existing circumstances, so as to sanction the evil man has brought in, the whole principle is gone, and we find ourselves exactly in the position of those who in Jeremiah's time were found crying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." They were counting upon the infallible faithfulness of God at the very moment He was dealing in judgment with them, and the end of it was ruin, just as it will be with us if we leave out the sense of our responsibility. Again, in Isaiah, the remnant were told to look to the rock

from whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence they were digged -thus reminded that Abraham was alone when God called him , and gave him the promise that his seed should be “as the stars of heaven for multitude.” So now, although they were alone, God was faithful, and, as He had blessed Abraham, would bless them; but in Ezekiel, when seeking to apply this principle, “Abraham was one,” they said, “and he inherited the land: but we are many;

the land is given us for inheritance,” they misapprehended the condition in which God regarded them. If we leave out the sense and apprehension of our condition we utterly want spiritual intelligence. Now I think we are in the “last days.” And I sometimes question if people weigh the full force of that. I could show you from Scripture that the Church, as a responsible system, was -- even from the very outset -- that which had got into the condition of judgment. A mistake that thousands are now slipping into is, that the Church judges, teaches, does this, does that; but if we take the word of God, we find that God has judged the Church. Yet His long-suffering and patience have borne with it as with Israel. What we have to look in the face is this. Man in responsibility is a uniform failure, and the Church has not escaped the effect of that principle. God, in His sovereign mercy, allowed evil to come up; so that before the closing of the Word He might give us His judgment upon it. Look at the epistle of Jude: Beloved, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. There is the faith in danger already. They were to contend for that which was slipping from them. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, v. 14, “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these” -- that is, those persons he speaks of -- “saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all,” &c.; thus showing, that those “certain men,” who had then come in, were the persons God had spoken of executing judgment upon, and showing too, that, at the very starting-point of the Church’s history, sufficient evil was evinced to call for the revelation that the ground of judgment was already there. Take the first epistle of John, and you get further: Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time {1 John 2:18}. Notice, that it is not the coming of Christ, but antichrist, and departure from the truth, that characterizes the last time. The Church of God hardly acknowledges that. In the following verses we read, They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. It is as if he would say, “Do not let these things discourage you; you have got