

PROPHETIC REVELATION

OVERSEERSHIP



OVERSEERSHIP

The
Ministries
in the House
of the Lord God.

He that hath an ear, *let him hear!*

FOREWORD

In October 1982, I preached a message entitled “**ELDERS = PASTORS?**” and then had it printed in a booklet. My objective was to set at rest the mind of many believers who were confused by the teaching in a booklet entitled “**THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY**” printed by an ‘Endtime Message’ minister in U.S.A. who taught that “*Ephesians 4:11 speaks not of a five-fold ministry, but of four offices: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors (shepherds, who also teach). Pastors (shepherds) and teachers are one and the same, and this office is committed to the elders*” [pg.8].

This minister further taught that the early church was “*governed by the Holy Ghost through the presbytery — a group of elders (bishops) in a local church who were appointed to lead and guide the flock... There is no scripture to support the existence of the so-called office of the pastor as we have it in the churches today; there are no scriptures to support the existence of an assistant pastor, and associate pastor, a presiding elder, a first (chief) elder, etc. These are the traditions of men and are not rooted in the Word of God. What we need today is Bible order for church government!*” [ibid.]

By “*Bible order for church government*” he meant “*that more than one elder is to rule the local assembly. These elders are equal in authority...*” [pg.6, ibid.]. (In a telephone conversation with me, this minister dismissed my teaching “*Elders=Pastors?*” as ‘nonsense’. He was adamant that his teaching was correct and said that even a Christian denomination agreed that his teaching was Scriptural. How foolish! Would this denomination agree with him on the *Oneness of the Godhead* or the *Serpent Seed* doctrine?)

As far as I know, such teaching has caused a great deal of confusion in many of the ‘Endtime Message’ churches around the world. On account of

that teaching, many believers have left their local assemblies because they are led by a *PASTOR* instead of a group of *ELDERS*. And in most cases, such immature believers often end up as *loners* without a place where they can fellowship with other saints of God. By blindly holding on to the belief in the *System of Elders*, they are actually groping in the dark and ignorant of the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Because of the brevity of my teaching in the booklet, "*ELDERS=PASTORS?*", I find it necessary to print this message "*OVERSEERSHIP*" to give a better understanding of the calling of **Overseers** in the Church of God. It includes several important points which were not dealt with in my earlier message.

Many people may find my teaching in this message distasteful. But I am not concerned about what people feel about my teaching. My responsibility is to share my revelation of the **WORD** of God with God's elect.

We are living in an age when people are becoming very critical in their spirit. The Christians are without exception. But, as Bible believers, if we are to be critical, let us be critical about our **revelation of the WORD** and carefully examine how we should walk in It. Amen!

Sincerely,

For the Love of *TRUTH*,

The Author



**This booklet is dedicated to the late Bro. M. R. Samuel of Tamil Nadu, India
— a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ and a precious brother
and fellow-minister, who wavered not in the Faith.**

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Richard I. s. Gan

First, I would like to deal with the erroneous teaching in the booklet, *“THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY”*. Looking at the statements which the author has made, it is obvious that he does *not* believe in a **5-Fold Ministry**. He strongly believes in a church government of **4 Offices** in which the *Office* of the **PASTOR** is (to be) committed to the *Elders*. **It is a glaring error to equate the Ministry of the Pastor with that of the Elder.**

Though the words *elders*, *bishops* and *shepherds* in the Bible often refer to the same group of men, the **Pastoral Ministry** of Ephesians 4:11 is *totally different* from the **Presbyterial Ministry**. That the ministries are entirely different are clearly shown even by the words descriptive of their callings.

Then we shall take a look at *Church History*, beginning from the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, and see why and how the Ascension Gifts, as recorded in the Book of Ephesians, were given to the **Ministry of Overseership** in the Church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Saints, if we set our mind on our Lord Jesus, and have our Faith in accord with the Revelation of His Word, I believe nothing can cause us to be so confused as many are because of their unbelief in the *Urim* and *Thummim* of the WORD.

GRACE & GIFTS

In Ephesians 4, Paul wrote that *“unto everyone of us is given **grace** according to the measure of the **gift** of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave **gifts** unto men... And He gave some **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors and teachers**”* (vv.7,8, 11). It is the **GRACE** of God that these **ASCENSION GIFTS** were given *“for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth*

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be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph.4: 12-16).

The **Ministry of the 5-Fold Ascension GIFTS** is *foreknown* and *fore-ordained* of God. Each office of the Ministry stands alone in its calling but complementary to the others as a whole. The 5-Fold Ministry is an ordained **GIFT** of God and cannot be done away with. *You either accept it or reject it.*

God’s Gifts are God’s Grace.

All gifts of God are given to the Church by God’s Grace. And **5 is the number for GRACE**. In *Bible Numerics*, God has designated the **number 5** to be the **number of REDEMPTION**: God’s GRACE to fallen man. His greatest **GIFT** is His Son, Jesus the Christ. He bore 5 wounds at Calvary, an atonement to purchase mankind back to God. **God’s Gifts** are **God’s Grace**, and the **gift** of the 5-Fold Ministry is His wonderful **grace** to the Church for the purposes listed in Ephesians 4:12-16.

MAN’S GRAMMARIAN RULE

It has been taught that this **Ministry of the Ascension Gifts** consists of only **4 Offices**: (i) *Apostles*, (ii) *Prophets*, (iii) *Evangelists*, and (iv) *Pastors and Teachers*. The proponents of this teaching support their interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 by using **Granville Sharp’s Rule** which states that when there are two nouns in the same phrase connected by “*kai*” (Greek word for “*and*”), with the first noun having an article, but the second without an article, the second noun refers to the same thing the first noun does, and is a further description of it. Therefore, because the noun “*Teachers*” does not have the definite article “*the*” before it, and being connected by “*kai*” to the noun before it, “*Pastors and Teachers*” refer to the one and same group — “**THE PASTORS AND TEACHERS**”. But, that this man-made rule is *unstable* can be seen in Mark 15:1 and Luke 22:66 concerning the ministering groups — the *scribes*, the *elders*, and the *high priests*. Are they not three different and distinct groups of ministers? The answer is obvious, but why did Mark record “the *scribes and elders*” as if they are one and the same group? And Luke had apparently grouped “the *high priests and scribes*” together? [Note: Paul listed “*TEACHERS*” as a gift by itself in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 without attaching it to “*PASTORS*”. A Teacher does not shepherd, but only teaches; whereas a Pastor both shepherds and teaches.]

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A look at the various Greek texts of the New Testament will show a slight variance in the writings. And where one permits the article, another may not. Why is there such a discrepancy?

Today there is hardly any Bible student who does not believe that the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. And many of the Greek scholars believe that the Greek language of Bible time was so perfect and precise that any Greek scholar who is a refined and accurate grammarian can truly know exactly what the New Testament word teaches. But is this not only a theory? Is this true? Is it not so that Greek scholars of repute of one denomination debate other students of another denomination, and is it not so that their arguments are based on identical Greek words and identical rules of grammar?

Certainly! From way back in the *Pergamean Age*, the religious world has been arguing over Greek words and their interpretations thereby causing division upon division till there are about 2000 denominations and sects today. Now, if the Greek is so perfect, and so ordained of God, why are there such disputes? Surely God did not intend us all to know Greek? Then again there are some students who claim that the original manuscripts were written in the Aramaic which was the spoken language of Jesus' days. However, whatever manuscript it may be, there is no discernible difference in content or doctrine. The students and translators may fight each other but the Holy Scriptures do not.

**WHAT GOOD IS
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In His economy, God certainly did *not* use superfluous words in writing His Two Testaments. Yet, there are students who are unconcerned about why the Author had used two or more words, which meanings appear to be the same, in a sentence or a text. They tend to take one word to be the emphasis of another when they actually have *different shades* of meaning. Two common examples are the words "*image*" and "*likeness*" of Genesis 1:26, and "*shorn*" and "*shaven*" of 1 Corinthians 11:6.

Now, what good is profound knowledge of the Bible language(s) if you **miss** the **revelation** of God's promised Word? Such was the case of the Scribes and the Pharisees and other great scholars who had failed to recognize the Word which they claimed to have superb knowledge of. See? It takes a REVELATION from God to bring out the TRUTH of the scriptures. That is exactly what Paul said, "*which things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*" (1 Cor.2:15).

OFFICES OR PERSONS

It is argued by some immature Christians that the **5-Fold Ministry of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers** are *not persons* but **offices** that God created! What they are saying is that **Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, Prophets and Apostles** are **NOT THE PERSONS BUT THE OFFICES**. This is sheer foolish talk! What good are offices without the persons? Is not a Teacher a person teaching the Word? Can the office without the person do that? Is not an Apostle a person who is a ‘sent one’, a setter of orders and a plumb-line holder of the Word? [Note: A missionary is *not* an Apostle but an Apostle is a missionary.] Is not an Evangelist a preacher who goes about from place to place to evangelize? Is not a Prophet, who has the gift of prophecy and who holds the plumb-line of the Word, also a preacher? [Note: The New Testament Prophet is not comparable to the Old Testament Prophet. Most Old Testament Prophets were ‘Seers’. They had *open visions* and carried messages direct from God to His people.]

Similarly, is not a Pastor (Shepherd) a person who tends and feeds his flock of sheep?

PASTOR

The word “*pastor*” is a Latin word for “*shepherd*”. The Greek word is “*poimen*”. Just because the word **PASTOR** is a Latin word, which is found only in Ephesians 4:11, we should not be overly anxious or critical about it, as some believers are. Many of our English words have their roots in other languages. A **Pastor** (or **Shepherd**) is one who tends sheep.

Again, there are others who are so overly critical and just as quick to knock down the offices because certain terms being used are not found in the Scriptures: terms such as “*assistant pastor*” or “*associate pastor*”, “*co-ministers*”, etc. Let us not be unduly taken up with such trifle terms as such people are. There are even some who would not use the word “Bible”, “Rapture”, “Hallelujah”, “Pentateuch”, etc., simply because they are not found in the Sacred Scriptures.

However, we can see from the Scriptures how the early Apostles worked. They usually went forth in twos; Paul with his co-labourer (or associate minister) Silas; and Barnabas had John Mark to assist him (i.e. his assistant minister). Read Acts 15:36-41. In 2 Corinthians 8:23, Paul called Titus his partner (i.e. associate minister) and his fellow helper (i.e. assistant minister).

Hence, words or terms like the aforementioned are merely the expressions or descriptions of certain persons, things, events, etc. Moreover, our English vocabulary has increased since the time of King James of England.

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But as long as they are used correctly, one should not be unduly critical and be anxious for nothing.

ELDER — *PRESBUTEROS*

The Greek word for **ELDER** is “*PRESBUTEROS*” from which the Presbyterian denomination gets its name. This Word has several applications and usages. It is used **i**) of age — a senior, an older man or woman (Acts 2:17, 1 Tim.5:1-2); the forefathers in Israel were called “elders” (Heb.11:2); **ii**) of rank or position of responsibility, (*a*) among the Gentiles (Num.22:7), and (*b*) in the Jewish nation, such as heads or leaders of the tribes and families, the seventy who assisted Moses (Num.11:16; Deut.27:1), members of the Sanhedrin (Matt.16:21; 26:47), and those who managed public affairs in the various cities (Lk.7:3, cf. Deut.25:7); and **iii**) in the Christian churches — those who desired and qualified for the work were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches (Acts 20:17,28; Tit.1:5,7).

As we can see, the word **ELDER** was very commonly used by the Jewish people. Though the New Testament was written in the Greek language, the thought and the expression were very much Jewish. All the men who penned the words were Jews. Hence, we cannot approach the Word of God with our Gentile intellect. If we do, we will make the same mistakes that the Gentile denominational churches have made for centuries.

BISHOP OR OVERSEER — *EPISKOPOS*

The term **BISHOPS** (Grk: *EPISKOPOI*) or **OVERSEERS** is **applied** to the servants of God in respect of the nature of their **work** (as those who supervise others as they work), whereas **ELDERS** (Grk: *PRESBUTEROI*) is always **applied** to those “older” in **age** who are generally more mature in spiritual experience, and who are qualified to assume the duty of **BISHOPRIC** (Grk: *EPISKOPEO*) which is “*exercising or taking the oversight over*” the churches.

The words **OVERSEERS** and **ELDERS** have been taken to be interchangeable by most Bible students who believe that they refer to the same persons. Such an idea was conceived because the word **ELDERS**, with reference to the position of **OVERSEERSHIP**, appears very frequently in the Book of Acts and certain other epistles (cf. Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet.5:1,2; Tit.1:5-7). Biblically, those elders who were qualified to assume the duty of bishopric were called **Bishops or Overseers**, and not otherwise. The term “*Elders of the Church*” was then commonly used with reference to them. The “elder” of 1 Timothy 5:1 and 1 Peter 5:5 was not a Bishop but an “older” man.

APPOINTMENT

Now, let's examine closely the making of "*THE ELDERS of the Church*". If we can understand by the Scriptures who those **ELDERS** were and the nature of their work, we would be able to see a distinct difference between the **Ministry of the Elders** and the **Ministry of the Pastors**.

1. "*This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work*" (1 Tim.3:1). This verse shows that the office of a BISHOP could be **desired for**.

2. Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:2-7, gave a list of qualifications for the post of a BISHOP. Before any elderly mature Christian man who desires the office can be appointed a BISHOP he **must meet the qualifications**. A similar list is recorded in Titus 1:6-9.

3. If a man **qualifies**, therefore, for the office of a BISHOP he is **eligible to be appointed** to that office. Now, to be a BISHOP, an eligible candidate is merely designated to, or **voted into**, the position. In Acts 14:23: "*And when they had ordained them elders...*", the Greek word "*ordained*" here is "*cheirotonesantes*" which means "*to designate by stretching out or pointing with the hand*". In other words, they were merely **appointed by voting**. Over in the Book of Titus, chapter 1, Titus was left behind in Crete by Paul to "*set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders* (that is, elderly and matured men)..." (v.5) as **BISHOPS** (v.7). The Greek word for "*ordain*" in verse 5 is "*kathistemi*" — "*to appoint, make*".

From the preceding paragraphs we see that the **office of the BISHOP** could be **desired for** by any matured and spiritually experienced man. If a man qualifies but has no desire for the office, what good does it do him and the church he is to oversee? Now, if this man who desires **qualifies**, then he would have to be **voted in**. It does not mean that a man who has the desire and the qualification should automatically be appointed an **Overseer**. If there are too many qualified men, then **voting** is necessary. But who votes them into the office, the Congregation or the Ministry? In today's many denominational churches the congregation of each church gathers every year at an appointed time to discuss '*church business*' in which bishops, deacons, secretary, treasurer, and other officers are appointed or removed. But in Scriptures we do not see such '*man*' method concerning the office of the BISHOP. In all cases the **ELDERS** were appointed or ordained to the office by the **Apostolic Ministry**. Whereas the deacons were chosen by the congregation (Acts 6:1-6). And the Apostles laid hands and prayed for them.

The nature of an **ELDER'S WORK** is to "*feed the flock of God..., taking the oversight thereof...*" (1 Pet.5:2). The Greek word for "*feed*" here is

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“poimaino”. It means *“to act as a shepherd”*. Hence, the **OVERSEERS** *“watch over”* – rule over, care for or instruct – the flock of God, but that does not mean that they are all equal rulers of the church or that they are all preachers of the Word. [Some Christians are so confused that they group all the ministers of the **5-Fold Ministry** into the **Eldership Ministry** and say that they are all equal in authority.]

The first epistle of Paul to Timothy clearly shows us that there were actually **two “kinds” of ELDERS** in the Early Church. When Timothy was left in Ephesus to continue the work of the Lord and to preside over the spiritual affairs of the Church, Paul exhorted him thus: *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine”* (1 Tim.5:17).

As far as **parity** of **ELDERS** is concerned, this verse deals a **fatal blow** to the whole scheme as **Paul actually divides the ELDERSHIP into three levels**. In other words, he says — **i) “HONOUR every Elder”, ii) “Give TWO-FOLD HONOUR to those (Elders) who oversee well with a deep burden of responsibility”, AND iii) “ESPECIALLY, PARTICULARLY the Elders who LABOUR IN THE MINISTERING OF THE WORD AND DOCTRINE.”** And it is the *third-level* Ministers and Servants of the Word who are to be provided their daily necessities as according to Paul’s next verse — *“For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward”* (1 Tim.5:18 cf. 1 Cor.9:9,13,14). And, as for *“them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear”* was Paul’s authoritative instruction to Timothy (1 Tim.5:20).

No matter how dogmatically one may assert it, **the view that all ELDERS in the Early Church ruled in parity cannot be substantiated by any single Scriptural text or factual historical account.**

ELDERS = PASTORS?

Now that we have identified the ELDERS and their NATURE OF WORK we should have an understanding of the following points:

1. The **Presbyterial Ministry** is *not* a part of the **Ascension Gift Ministry** of Ephesians 4:11 because no one can **desire** (in that sense of the word) to be an Apostle, a Prophet or one of the others in the latter Ministry.

2. There are **certain qualifications** required of those desiring the office of a **Bishop**, while there is **none** laid down for any of the **5-Fold**

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Ministry. God provides the Church with the Ascension Gifts. Therefore He has **foreordained** the men, who meet His qualifications, to their specific ministries.

3. An **elder** has to be **appointed** or voted in by the **Ministry** (of Ephesians 4:11), whereas the **5-Fold Ministry** is a **definite calling** of God. The ministers of the 5-Fold Ministry are personally ordained by God Himself. No man, church or organisation could ever ordain an **Apostle**, a **Prophet**, an **Evangelist**, a **Pastor** or a **Teacher** to **THE MINISTRY**.

4. The **Ascension Gifts** are **foreordained** of God and **set** in His Church for the **purposes** of perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ (Eph.4:11-12). The **Presbyterial Ministry** is in fact a carry over from the Old Testament type Elders among the people of Israel.

PUTTING AWAY A GIFT

I have heard from some who disagree with their Pastor (on whatever it was) that they would like to have the congregation go against the Pastor and vote him out and have someone else voted in to take his place. This amused me very much.

If a man has a **true calling** and is ordained of God for a ministry, no man, church or organisation can get rid of him. It could not be done, unless the **“PASTOR”** is **not** a **“POIMEN”** but a **“PRESBUTEROS”** who was voted into office. If Paul (or any of the Apostles) is a PASTOR of a church, and the people disagree with his teaching, could they vote him out? No. Because he is not put into the office by a vote. Whatever they may disagree with him, they will have to put up with him *or walk out*.

As I have said earlier, a gift of God is a gift that cannot be done away with; you either **accept** it or **reject** it. It refers also to each of the **Five Ascension Gifts: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers**.

OCCUPATION

What is a Pastor?

He is a SHEPHERD, one who tends sheep. If he is a “born” shepherd, he could not but tend sheep all his life. It’s in his blood, so to speak. He is foreordained to that occupation of tending the sheep in his fold, his lot, that the Chief Shepherd has given him.

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What is a Bishop?

He is an ELDER who is given, or appointed to, the job of overseeing the sheep. He takes the place of a Shepherd to “*feed* (Grk: *poimaino* — ‘to act as a shepherd to’) *the flock of God...*, *taking the oversight thereof...*” (1 Pet.5:2). He is **not** an **ordained** (or a born) SHEPHERD **but appointed to act as one**, in the stead of one. It is thus, his **overseership, BISHOPRIC**. He does the work of a PASTOR just like Timothy was told to “*do the work of an Evangelist*” (2 Tim.4:5). As Timothy could **stop** doing the work of an Evangelist, so could an ELDER his bishopric. He could **resign** willingly from office or **be removed** from office if he fails at any time to meet the qualifications.

[Note: When God called a person to a ministry, he can never get away from that call. (Remember Jonah?) However, if he enters the ministry on his own desire, he may later change his mind about it and God will not go after him.]

ELDERS, BISHOPS, PASTORS

Titus 1:5-9 has often been cited to prove that **Elders, Bishops and Pastors** of the Early Church were one and the same group of people. Because each of the appointed **elders** (v.5) was a **BISHOP** (v.7), a BISHOP must then be an ELDER. And since ELDERS did oversee the flock as SHEPHERDS, then ELDERS must be SHEPHERDS (i.e. PASTORS). **However**, a careful reading of the text will show us that Titus was told by Paul **to ordain (appoint) elders** (*elderly* matured and spiritually experienced men) **ONLY to be OVERSEERS (BISHOPS) of the flock. Young men were never appointed**, or else why the designation “**ELDERS**”.

Now, **an ELDER is always an “older” person. He is definitely not a youth**. A person becomes more mature as he gets older. Remember that the word “*PRESBUTEROS*” does not denote him as an OVERSEER, he is just an **ELDER**. And as the Kingdom of God was expanding very quickly in early Church period, OVERSEERS were greatly needed to take the oversight of the churches. As such, the OVERSEERSHIP was given to the “older”, more matured and spiritually experienced men. [Later, in the study, we shall see how young men who had a definite calling in the **5-Fold Ministry** became part of the MINISTRY OF OVERSEERSHIP (not ELDERSHIP).]

CHURCH BEGINNING

Because the Bible shows that the ELDERS WERE APPOINTED to oversee the churches, it is simply concluded by some that they were PASTORS, and that they must come under the 5-FOLD MINISTRY. However, a study of the

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beginning of the Church will tell us why the **Pastoral Ministry** was left to the care of certain elders who were mature and experienced enough to oversee the flock among them. These elders, or presbyters, who were appointed by the Apostles to the bishopric, formed the **presbytery**. But, that does not mean that there were no God-called PASTORS.

In an upper room in Jerusalem, there were 120 disciples of Christ waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit into their lives. Among them were 11 chosen men who were ordained to the Apostolic Ministry. There was no Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor or Teacher in the upper room then. The disciples did not know at that time what would be given to the Church except the promise that the Holy Spirit would come to teach and guide them into all truth as well as show them all things to come (Jhn.14:26; 16:13-15).

The beginning saw these Apostles as the main thrusting body in spreading the Gospel and establishing churches everywhere the Word was received. Being Apostles, they embraced the other ministries lower than theirs, that is, they did also the works of the Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher though these gifted ministries were yet to be put specifically into the Church.

[Note: A man with the gift of a certain ministry could also do the work of another ministry which is lower in position than his, but never one which is higher. For example, an Evangelist could do the work of a Pastor and a Teacher, but he could not be an Apostle or a Prophet for he is not called and ordained of God any higher than an Evangelist.]

Now, these Apostles could not be tied down to pastoring the churches in fixed localities without disobeying the Lord's command to go into the world and preach the Gospel and establish churches. In about one or two years of preaching, the number of the disciples multiplied. And problems arose almost immediately, as recorded in Acts chapter 6. There was a complaint by the Hellenist Jews against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of relief. The Apostles, who could not leave the Word of God to serve tables, said unto the multitude of believers: "*Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business*" (v.3). This pleased the people and they chose seven men whom they set before the Apostles who prayed and laid hands on them. These 'seven' were generally called the first deacons by most Bible students though they were not mentioned by that designation. They were apparently young and unmarried men. [Note and compare the qualifications that Paul later listed out in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for those in the Gentile churches who desired to be deacons. Verse 12 *excludes* polygamists but *not* single men.]

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STEPHEN

Not very long after Stephen, a man full of faith and power of the Holy Ghost, was chosen and appointed to serve tables, Luke recorded that he was found disputing with certain Jews belonging to the Synagogue of the Libertines. Being unable to resist the wisdom of the Spirit in Stephen, these Jews instigated the people, the elders and the scribes, who arrested Stephen and had him brought before the Sanhedrin council. Stephen stood bravely before the council and died a martyr in defence of the Truth. His dying words had an effect on a young man named Saul.

Now, what was Stephen doing out there among the people if he was appointed to serve tables among the multitude of disciples? Was it his duty to go out and evangelize to the sinners and to teach them the Word of the Prophets of old concerning the Messiah?

Apparently he felt led to do that not because he must witness as a believer but it was the perfect will of God for him. His appointment to serve tables was certainly not the perfect will of God in his life. He definitely had the calling of an **Evangelist** to go out there, where the sinners were, to give them the Good News. From whom did he get that **calling**? Was it the Apostles who said to him: “*Stephen, get out there and be an Evangelist*”? Or, did he receive a **personal revelation** from the Holy Spirit concerning God’s gift to him?

PHILIP

Of the seven “deacons”, the second of the two most outstanding men, whose lives are mentioned in the Bible, was Philip the Evangelist. After the martyrdom of Stephen, there was a great persecution upon the church in Jerusalem and the believers were scattered abroad. [Saul (Paul) was a leader in the persecution.] This was definitely a condition that the Lord Himself had allowed to prevail so that His Gospel could be preached far and wide (Acts 8:1, cf. 1:8).

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). From there God directed him southward unto Gaza to preach to an Ethiopian eunuch, and then to Azotus by a supernatural transportation by the Spirit. He preached the Gospel in all cities, on west Judea, until he came to Caesarea where he made his home. It was recorded that he became a family man, about 30 years later, and had four virgin daughters who possessed the gift of prophecies. When Paul reached Caesarea, while on his way to Jerusalem during his third missionary journey, he stayed at the house of Philip.

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CONDITION AND TIME

Being Omnipotent and Omniscient, God foreknew all the different situations that the Church would go through. And as each condition arises through the corridor of time, He is able to meet the need of those conditions. The Lord had also promised to lead the believers into all truth and to show them things to come by His Holy Spirit (Jhn.16:13). Thus, in the process of time, God began to give Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor.12) as well as Gifts of the various Ministries (Eph.4:11) to those whom He had foreordained.

We have seen how God *permitted* the Hellenist widows to be neglected so that able and honest men had to be appointed to meet that need of ‘overseeing’ the tables. Then, through a great persecution upon the Church, God allowed His people to be scattered abroad from Jerusalem so that His Gospel might be carried far and wide. Thus, we see how the Spirit of God brings about His **Work** and **Word** in and through the Body of believers to the place where God could perfect her. Through time and changing conditions, certain gifts of ministrations would have to be added to the Church in order that the Body would function healthily in the Spirit of God.

THE WAYS OF GOD

Let’s look at the first chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, regarding the selection of Matthias to take over the bishopric of Judas Iscariot.

Although Jesus knew who Judas Iscariot was, yet he chose him as His disciple in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Jhn.6:70,71; 13:18; 17:12). Judas was an **apostle** of Christ. The word “*apostle*” simply means a “*sent one*” or “*one sent forth*”. **However**, Judas **did not** fit the description of the **Apostle of the 5-Fold Ministry which was given only after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ** for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the Body of Christ, that the saints might come to their place that God had so ordained (Eph. 4:11-16; 2:20). It is interesting to note that when Peter quoted Psalm 109:8, saying, “*His bishopric let another take*” (Acts 1:20b), he was **referring to the Ministry of Overseership and not Apostleship**. And certainly someone did take his place as an **Overseer (Bishop)**. But as we read the rest of the Book of Acts we realise that the man whom God had chosen was more than just a **Bishop**; he was ranked among the other **Apostles** as a **NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH APOSTLE**.

[Note: Theological-minded men and certain “Endtime Message” ministers have concluded that all those who are called Apostles must possess the gifts of signs and miracles just like the Twelve Apostles. When Jesus sent out the Twelve in his days, they were all known as Apostles — “*sent ones*”

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(Lk.9). Even the seventy others who were appointed and “sent forth” by Christ were Apostles though they were not so mentioned (Lk.10). But the **work** that they were appointed to do was much **different** from the work which Christ later set for the Twelve and other Apostles to do (Eph.2:20; 4:11-16; Tit.1:5). Similarly the work of the the New Testament Prophets was much different from those of the Old Testament Prophets. **All the Apostles, after the Ascension of Christ, were “sent forth” to found churches and to give God’s revealed Word to set the Church in order.** They cannot be imitated.]

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Men chose Matthias. But it was **God** who chose Paul. As recorded in Acts chapter 6, out of the seven young men who were chosen to serve tables, only two were mightily used by God in His Own Ministry. Was there not something that God wanted to show us? Definitely!

When the believers in the upper room cast their lots to select Barsabas Justus or Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot, they were only doing what seemed right under the circumstances. Yes, they prayed before they cast their lots, “*and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles*” (Acts 1:26). But does that mean that Matthias was

the one ordained of God so that the number of the **Apostles** could be maintained at twelve (because it is a significant number to the Jews)? Certainly not! **Casting lots** or using man’s judgement to choose people for the Ministry of Christ is only based on the **ability and wisdom of man**. The eleven Apostles had done the best thing under the circumstances. Though Matthias “*was numbered with the eleven apostles*” (cf. Acts 6:2), it was the disciples who had put him in that position. And God had **permitted** it just as He permitted the sinners to crucify His Only Begotten Son so that He would be numbered with the transgressors (Mk.15:28).

The *seven* “deacons” were *chosen by men* to ‘oversee’ tables. **Two** of them had a definite revelation *direct from God* regarding their calling in the Ministry of the Word beside serving tables. The ‘*seven*’ were **chosen by men to meet a need, but God gave gifts of the Ministry** to only two of them. Although the ‘*seven*’ were judged to be honest men full of the Holy Ghost, yet according to the historical writing of Ireneus (in 175-180 A.D.), Nicolas, who was one of the ‘*seven*’, became an apostate. He taught the believers to be sensual and was the founder of a sect called the *Nicolaitanes*. [According to some Historians, the evidence was circumstantial.]

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PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

The first record of **New Testament Prophets** is in Acts 11:27. It was around the year **43 A.D.** that they went up from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them was Agabus who prophesied of a great dearth throughout the Roman world, which came to pass during the reign of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:28). More **Prophets and Teachers** are mentioned in Acts chapter 13. They were found in the Church at Antioch in about the year **46 A.D.** Paul (then named Saul), who was recognized as a fearless preacher and teacher of the Word of the Lord Jesus (Acts 9) was among the group. He was yet to be elevated to the higher office of Apostle and Messenger to the Gentiles.

Therefore, it appears that by the year 46 A.D. God had set the **Apostles, Evangelists, Prophets and Teachers** in the Body of Christ. And it seems that there was *no Pastor* at all. But when Paul wrote his epistle to the Ephesians in the year **62 A.D.**, the 5-Fold Ministry of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors (or Shepherd) and Teachers seemed to be **complete** in the Body of Christ for quite some time already.

MEETING THE NEEDS

The first mention of **ELDERS** is found in Acts 11:30. These **ELDERS** were in Jerusalem, the place of the birth of the Church. The converts were all Jews. As I have mentioned earlier, the word “Elder” or “Elders” was in *common usage*, even to this day. Remember that the *ways and systems* which governed the *life style* of the Jews had an *effect* upon the early *Jewish converts* to the Gospel. So it is no surprise that they would *relate* themselves to their *Jewish system of ELDERS*. But it is not known when it started to govern the ‘new tribe’ of God’s born again children (the Church). Like the seven “deacons” who were appointed to serve tables, “**THE ELDERS of the Church**” could have been the very first **ministration office** established by the wisdom of the Apostles to oversee the flock, which was increasing daily. With the increasing number of converts, there was a corresponding increase in responsibility on the Apostles to meet their needs which would distract the Apostles from their great commission. Remember: the Apostolic Ministry is that of ‘*going forth*’ and, therefore, *local Overseers* must be appointed to feed the flock. (But praise be to God! He is able to meet every need of His people! Amen!)

In Numbers 11:10-17, when the children of Israel failed the test of faith that God had put in their way, the Lord became angry with them and Moses was troubled. He began to complain to God as to why he was made to carry such a burden upon his back. And the Lord, seeing the need of Moses, took pity on him. He said to Moses: “*Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as **able and mature** leaders and officers among the people. Get*

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*them to the Tent of Meeting with you. I will come down and talk with you, and I will take the Spirit which is upon you and put It upon them. Then they will **help** you **carry** the **burden** of the people that you will not have to carry it alone.*"

Hence, when the Apostles ordained **elders** to be **Overseers** of the flock of God, it cannot be denied that they had the same *wisdom* which God had given to Moses. Though none of the 70 elders was called directly and personally by God, each of them had a **share** in helping Moses in his ministry through the instrumentality of the Prophet himself. **They existed to meet the needs of God's people. They were not the PRIMARY means by which God brought His Words and carried out His Works.** They were needed for the **supporting role** in the Ministry. In other words, we can say that the "Elder" Ministry was a *SECONDARY* or *supporting ministry* ordained by God through the **Prophets** or **Apostles**.

POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITIES

After the Apostle Paul had ministered to the Gentiles for some years, he also established the positions of **Bishop** and **Deacon** in every local church as he saw the need for them. In his first epistle to Timothy, he **specifically laid down certain necessary qualifications for the posts** so that only those men with the right qualities could be appointed to the positions (1 Tim.3:1-13). There was *no such requirement for the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*. Unlike the Bishops and Deacons, Ministers of the 5-Fold Ministry are not restricted to any one local church.

A church could create any position of responsibility if it has need for it. It could create, for example, positions like secretary, treasurer, trustee, janitor, etc., with each position requiring certain qualifications. Those who desire and qualify can then be appointed by the members of the church by way of vote.

THE FOUNDATION

The Church in its beginning needed to be fully and well established on the **Foundation, Christ the Rock**. And the *ministries* of the **Apostles** and the **Prophets** were the most important then. They were (and still are) the foundation (objectively) of which the saints were (or are) built upon. For it was (and still is) through them that the Mystery of Christ was (or is) revealed (Eph.2:19-3:6). Seeing, therefore, the importance of their ministries, they travelled from one place to another to preach the Gospel, making disciples of Christ and establishing every local assembly of saints with the revelation of the hidden truth which they had received from Christ. They could not stay and pastor a local assembly for long. So they had to commit the pastoral

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work to mature and qualified **elders** until such time God would raise His ordained **Shepherds (Pastors)**, usually from among the **elders**, whom He had foreknown before the foundation of the world, and set them accordingly in each local assembly .

THE TARES

Not all men who occupied leadership positions in the Church in Bible times were Spirit led. Two examples are Diotrephes (3 Jhn.9,10) and Demas (2 Tim.4:10) who were very **self-centred** persons. Such attitude could **generate apostasy and heresy** among the believers. A group might be **misled** by certain ordained Elders whose interpretations of Scriptures were not only based on their whims and fancies but also usually to the interpreters' own benefit. This is the kind of people who **would not recognise the Apostles' revelation and authority and who dared to contradict the Lord**. If not, where did the tares come from? Thus, tares were easily sown among the true worshippers as the words of such 'leaders' had a definite influence on the hearers. This actually happened in the early Second Century A.D.

PRESIDING BISHOP

If all the "*elders are equal in authority*" (ibid. **THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY**) as the author so dogmatically asserted, has he ever wondered how a church matter should be solved if there is an **even** number of opposing opinions? Or should every church ordain an **odd** number of Elders so that such a situation will never arise? C. H. Spurgeon so aptly remarked that if ten grooms were appointed to look after a horse, the poor animal would probably starve.

Without a lynchpin among the Elders, there could obviously be no acceptance of an ultimate charge from the Lord such as expressed in Apostle Paul's epistles to Timothy. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5 and 1 Timothy 5:17-22. Because Timothy was left by Paul as the Presiding Bishop over the church in Ephesus (1 Tim.1:3) he was able to accept those charges put to him, including the one dealing with any errant Elders of the church. (The Presiding Bishop is intended to be a specialist in Bible teaching and pastoral counselling. The other Bishops are to share in the administration their own gifted abilities in the Work of God, but they should do all under the chairmanship of, and in total fellowship with, their Pastor, the Presiding Bishop, and not as individualists.)

In this endtime, if anyone brings into the Church a system of Church Government comprising of only Elders (without a Pastor), he is bringing in a "**dead**" system which will never lead the people anywhere. God always has His true servants in every church, but **only ONE** would be given a **greater**

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measure of authority than the rest. And if the rest are spiritual, they will not say, “*Well, aren’t we all supposed to be equal in authority?*”

Then again, **why did not** the Lord Jesus address His seven letters to **ALL the Bishops** of each of the seven churches in Asia Minor instead of addressing individual letter to **only ONE** in each of them (Rev.1-3)? Apparently, in every of these churches, there must have been **One Overseer (Bishop)** who was the most outstanding in his ministry, and who was a most sought after leader. (Remember: God deals with individuals, and not with a group.) The spiritual believers would have no problem in recognizing such a spiritually gifted man who had been exalted by the Lord to be **THE PASTOR** (or **Shepherd**, Grk: *Poimen*) **and THE PRESIDING BISHOP** over the flock and not just an **ELDER** among the **ELDERS**. (Remember that spiritual children of God, being led by the Holy Spirit, do not need to be told where the spiritual leadership of God lies.) One such man of God was Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, who was the spiritual father of Irenaeus. He was **THE SHEPHERD** of the flock of Smyrna. See, it was just like Stephen and Philip whom God pulled out of the ‘seven’ and made them Evangelists.

But whatever the Spirit of the Living God had done, the devil would **impersonate** it. Hence, it was not very long after the Apostles had all been taken home to be with the Lord that the **antichrist spirit** began to set up his own **system** in the Church where certain **politic-minded Elders** *made themselves Presiding Bishops* over all the others in the rank. These **money-faced, power-hungry** men had no qualms about *twisting* the Scriptures to get what they wanted. Such a man was Ignatius of Antioch who even told Christians to regard **THE BISHOP** as the Lord Jesus himself. This is the **system of the Nicolaitanes** under which the clergy exercised absolute control over the laity through **organized priesthood**. This *devilish teaching* soon gave rise to **different systems of Archbishop and Bishops, and apostolic succession**. And **ALL THESE ARE (THAT) TRADITIONS OF MEN WHICH ARE NOT ROOTED IN THE WORD OF GOD**. The systems were not laid down by the early Apostles. Not very long after that, the Church plunged into an era of spiritual darkness. Then, a handful of God’s true servants fought hard to keep the **LIGHT** burning.

Beloved, God will never allow His spiritual people to be controlled by man. He always provides spiritual leadership to His people through His true servants.

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The Ministry of an **Overseer** is to exercise spiritual care over God’s flock of born again children. An Overseer must have the **spiritual aptitude** to guide the flock. **All ELDERS appointed must be “apt to teach”** (1 Tim.3:2,

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cf. 2 Tim.4:2 – Paul’s charge to Timothy). But, “*apt to teach*” is not “*apt to preach*”. **Preaching includes teaching**, but not vice versa. **Teaching involves counselling, guiding, encouraging, helping, convincing, nursing, etc..** *Preaching the Word and Doctrine is exclusive only to those who are called to be the SERVANTS OF THE WORD.*

AGE

It should be clear now that *not* all “elders” mentioned in the New Testament were Bishops although they were all “older” people (1 Tim.5:1; 1 Pet.5:5). And only those who were qualified and appointed were ordained into the office of Bishopric. All those appointed to such office in the local assembly were BISHOPS; they were commonly called **THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH**. *Hence, no Bishop/Elder was ever a “young” man.*

However, there were young men (like Stephen and Philip) who were called of God into the **5-Fold Ministry**. That was a **direct and personal**

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calling from God. They were **God’s gifts to His Church** for the perfection of the saints, the work of the ministry and the edifying of the Body of Christ. Each of the **5-Fold Ministry** also **oversees** the flock of God in a different way. Remember Peter’s quotation of Psalm 109:8 concerning the Bishopric (Overseership) of Judas Iscariot to be taken over by another? Matthias took it by lot. But Paul was the one whom God had ordained to fill that place. **Hence, members of the 5-Fold Ministry are all BISHOPS (OVERSEERS)**. *Thus, we can call any young man who is ordained of God as an Evangelist or a Pastor, an OVERSEER, but we cannot call him an ELDER. See? Because he is not an “older” person. (Have you noticed that the Bishops in the **Presbyterial Ministry** were all elders, but those of the **5-Fold Ministry** were not so?)*

When **Apostle** Peter wrote: “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an ELDER,...*” he was **identifying with** the elders who were appointed OVERSEERS. Yet, in identifying with them, Peter was not denying his apostleship. *If* Peter was a young man, he certainly would *not* have used the word “elder” (Grk: *sumpresbuteros*, “fellow elder”) to identify with them.

OVERSEERSHIP

CHURCH AGES

During the reformation period when the Truth of God was slowly being restored back to the Church, there were more able Teachers of the Word. At about the same time evangelism gained momentum and continued up to the early Twentieth Century. And today, the Ascension Gifts of the 5-Fold Ministry are at work to perfect the saints that they may **be established** in the Present Truth and be brought to complete maturity. The question is: **Are the saints able to recognize the true ministry from the false and to distinguish between those who take them to the Word and those who merely tickle their itching ears?** I am not referring to the denominational preachers; they have their own standards and interpretations. But I am referring to those who claim to be followers of the LIGHT which the Messenger to this Laodicean Church Age had shown us.

AGE OF CONFUSION

We are living in an age of confusion. And there is delusion everywhere. Many of the saints who follow the *Message* of the Seventh Church Age Messenger, William M. Branham, are finding it hard to even understand the Truth of the Message of the Prophet. Much of the confusion were generated after his death. One of the reasons is the **extremism** of “*say what the tapes say*”, taking in *word for word* **without** a revelation as to what the Prophet-Messenger was actually saying. Many of this ‘extremist sect’ are actually making Brother Branham **an infallible man of God**, literally *comparable* to the Pope of the Roman Catholic church.

Brother Branham’s teaching was to direct us **back to the ORIGINAL TEACHING of the Apostolic Fathers**. He told us to *check his teachings with the WORD of God* and to *believe the ABSOLUTE, the REVELATION of God’s Written Word* – the Sacred Scriptures – and **not** just his words.

Ministers have a responsibility to feed the Word to the people and it is no small task. Because of that, some ministers hold themselves over the people as “*lord over God’s heritage*” – spiritual leaders guide but do not control (1 Pet.5:3) – while others are like Diotrefes desiring to have the pre-eminence among them (3 Jhn.9,10). Yet, others because of what is going on, throw their own “lights” (of so-called divine revelation) among the people wherever they go, thus adding more fuel to the wild fire of confusion.

Beloved, do not think for a moment that because you stick to “**THE SPOKEN WORD**” books or the tapes of the Prophet you are a true believer of the Word of God! The Pharisees and the Sadducees claimed their prophets too, but **failed to have the revelation of the Word** standing right amongst

them! The Word, the Absolute, was standing right there and yet they went on quoting their prophets' words against Him (the Word made flesh), the **PRESENT TRUTH** for their hour!

TURNING THE CORNER

When Brother William Branham came, it was then a period of unclear light which was neither day nor night, a dismal day indeed! (Zechariah 14: 6-7 *types* such a day.) Denominationalism held the reins on the saints. But then Brother Branham led the saints to turn the corner to receive the **EVENING TIME MESSAGE**. Yet the **EVENING LIGHT** (of the Evening Star) is **not** the **FULL LIGHT OF THE SUN** (Day Star or Morning Star). The sun had already set and the whole scene was just gloomy and bleak by reason of the clouds of spiritual darkness hanging in the air. This is the age of Laodicea. **But the EVENING LIGHT lits the way out of spiritual death in denominationalism towards the PROMISED WORD OF GOD.** We could see an *antitype* of how Moses led the children of Israel out of their bondage in the night after the nation of Egypt had gone through a period of dismay (Ex.12: 29-42).

There is another corner to turn. And many who have seen the **EVENING LIGHT** and have been following it have not yet turned the corner to receive the **SUN RISE MINISTRY**. The **“Evening Light”** was sent before the **“Sun Rise”**. (Compare the two *types* in Zechariah 14:6-7 and Malachi 4:2. Read 2 Peter 1:19.) The children of Israel who got out of Egypt in the night, after a period of dismay, *turned the corner* under Joshua's leadership and went into the **PROMISED LAND**, and conquered the first city when the sun rose up in the horizon (Josh.3; 6:15). In a certain war the sun even had to stand still till the battle was over (Josh.10). By this type, then, we see that in the **BRIDE MOVE** God has given us a **JOSHUAIC LEADERSHIP** – ‘Jehovah-Saviour’ – in the **5-Fold Ministry** to lead us on to perfection. Compare Ephesians 4:11-16 with what Malachi said, *“But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall”* (Mal.4.2). Likewise in the writing of Peter's second epistle, he gave us an *analogous* exhortation: *“We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star (sun) arise in your hearts”* (2 Pet.1:19). That's right. If we have heard the

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“*midnight cry*” – the “*shout*” – of the messenger who forerun the Second Advent of Christ, then like the **wise virgins** we should have enter into the wedding and feasting with Christ (cf. Matt.25:1-13). Amen! Let **Christ THE WORD** become a full revelation (as the sun shining forth) in our lives and spirits.

‘SON’ RISE, ‘SON’ SHINE

God, therefore, has not only given us the *EVENING LIGHT MESSAGE* and expect us to stay put but has also given us the *SUN RISE MINISTRY* of Ephesians 4:11 that we may *GO FORTH* and *GROW UP* **mature** and **complete** in Christ Jesus. **The Bride is now directed by the Spirit of Christ to DWELL IN THE ‘SON’LIGHT OF THE WORD** just like Israel did dwell in booths in the last of the Seven Feasts of Jehovah — Feast of Tabernacles. Now we should be as calves gamboling as we dwell in the Word and the Word in us. But if you continue to live in the *EVENING LIGHT* and quoting ‘*QUOTES/STATEMENTS*’ of the *EVENING TIME* Messenger while the **PRESENT TRUTH** of the *SUN RISE MINISTRY* and *MESSAGE* of the *DAY STAR* stand before you, you are in danger of losing whatever you have. Read Matthew 13:11-12. [Note: Did not the “**Evening Light**” Messenger cry out, “*Back to the WORD! Stay with IT!*”? And did not **God’s SON RISE** up saying, “*I am the WORD! If you will open up your heart, I will come in and sup with you and you with me. And we will abide together*”?] And remember, a **rejection** of the 5-FOLD MINISTRY, the ASCENSION GIFTS MINISTRY OF CHRIST, is a **rejection** of perfection.

The Bride is enjoying the ‘**SON’ SHINE** in this DAYTIME hour because of the *EVENING LIGHT* that leads her to **IT**. She is in the “Bride” or “Token” realm. But the denominations, caught up with the “Laodicean” spirit of the age, are still groping in the dark.

May you see the move of God for this hour is my prayer.



* * * * *



LISTEN. . . .

The Prophet-Messenger said:

“Back to the Message, brother! Back to the Original! Back to Pentecost! Back to the real blessing! ...if an angel come from Heaven preaching anything else, let him be accursed. So it’s back to the Message again, friends! It’s Evening Time!” *[Seventy Weeks of Daniel]*

[**Question:** Bro. Branham pointed us “Back to the Message”. What “Message” was he pointing us to?...for the real blessing of God? – Ed.]

“Would the Bride of Christ have a ministry before the Rapture? Sure. That’s what’s going on right now. Certainly! It is the Message of the hour. And the Bride of Christ consists of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Is that right? That’s the Bride of Christ, she’s got a ministry – a great ministry – the ministry of the hour. It’ll be so humble...” *[Questions on the Seals]*

[**Note:** The **Ministry of Malachi 4** brought about a RESTORATION of the saints **back to the Message** of the ORIGINAL, PENTECOST, APOSTOLIC FATHERS whose REVELATION was laid down for us in the Sacred Scriptures. Then after the saints have been restored back to the WORD, the **Ministry of Ephesians 4** takes over to **bring about a PERFECTION of the saints in the WORD**. The leadership of the Holy Spirit is, firstly, in the APOSTLES, secondly, the PROPHETS, then the EVANGELISTS, the PASTORS and the TEACHERS. – Ed.]

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