

EMPTY SEATS

Hebrew 10:25: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

It just seems I can hear Lucifer saying to his imps in one of their strategy sessions: “Now, imps, what have you done today to weaken the Kingdom of God?”

With impish glee, a suspicious-looking spirit replies: “We have been emptying the seats in the churches.”

“Nothing could please me better”, answered their king. “But tell me, what plans have succeeded the most?”



“We have found that malice, envy, pride, and hatred kindle fires of dissension and separation better than worldliness, better even than our modernistic preachers do. And I persuaded one man who had a headache to stay out, for that sermon last Sunday might have changed his whole life. Then, I found this plan worked best on Mrs. Jones. She wanted to visit some old friends and I urged her to go. And, I caused another lady to worry about how her hair looked, and she decided not to go.”

“Good,” said the king, “just keep up the good work a time or two, and they will soon be easy bait to keep away.”

Another veteran imp came up with this: “I induced many older men and women to stay out because they were not strong enough. Going to church is too great a mental and physical strain on them. And, among the younger set, I influenced them to have parties and late movie watching; this has done the most to keep them away.”



“You are doing fine my imps,” said his majesty with a sneer. “This will help discourage the preachers more than all my other devices combined. I know how they like to have a full church to preach to. Discouragement is the best tool I have to use on them, and this seat-emptying will really drag them to the bottom.”

“What about my plan? You have not allowed me to speak yet, Lucifer. I will tell you the best one. Jealousy or hatred won’t rival it. I have found that their love for money and comforts and pleasures are best met by working them seven days a week. They are too tired to go, and don’t get anything out of the services because their minds are weary or crowded with the cares of this life. The Bible is choked right out of them. This will make you laugh – I’ve even got preachers working on Sundays, and this has brought so much dissension in the churches that they are ineffective in their preaching.”



“Splendid plan,” replied Lucifer. “It looks like faith will soon disappear from the earth, and then we can really take over.”

. . . And sad to say, he is taking over.

Preachers may work and pray, offering their best efforts over a sermon, but seeing no results to those who attend, and hurting over those who don’t come. This will take the heart out of any preacher who cares for the Kingdom of God.

When people don’t come, they lose a blessing. This tends to greatly discourage them, and make them backslide, also.



So — with the preacher chilled by empty seats or an unresponsive congregation, and the saints chilled by staying away from the fire, it won’t be long before the church is lukewarm, and the Lord will spew them out of His mouth. And satan will have won the battle, just like he did with Balaam’s scheme when he couldn’t curse the people of God, so

he found a way to get God to work for him.

When Christians stay away from church, it has the best effect on sinners, for they will be convinced there is not much to the Christian faith when the ones claiming to have the goods stay away. The devil will soon get a mortgage on your soul which he will foreclose on, on the judgment day.

A real saint cried, when hearing this, *“I’ll go to church, if only to defeat you! I’ll cheat you, you old serpent, out of at least one seat.”* And, keeping his word, he

influenced many others to let nothing trifling keep them from God's house.

Did you know the church is the House of God? Jesus said so. He said:

Mark 11:17: And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My House shall be called of all nations the House of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.



A man by the name of Peter Berger wrote in his present book, *The Rumor of Angels*, "Preachers set the pace for Christian churches, which expresses and sustains the religious life of our nation. Since religious convictions lie at the bottom of all human conduct, ministers always have a profound, long-term effect on our lives. Protestant preachers have been dictated by their antagonists. If ministers are off balance, then the church becomes the same and becomes ineffective. Thus, the church is becoming a laughing stock to the world."



Preachers and the Church must listen to the Word of God; and by the 'Word of God', I mean the *Bible!* The Word is remarkably fixed and stable.

Psalms 119:89: For ever, O LORD, Thy Word is settled in Heaven.

Matthew 24:35: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.

Matthew 5:18: For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.

Thus, Jesus reveals the Word of God to be incomparable.

In contrast to the unstable quality of the words of modern men, so changeable that text books in school which used to change every ten years, now change every two years.

Isaiah 40:8: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever.

If you want to be established, strong, rooted and grounded in the faith, and kept

from being wishy-washy, it would be a good idea to feed your heart and mind on this Book. Any preacher who abandons the Bible will be abandoned by God, and should be abandoned by his congregation. We don't need their empty, flippant words in circulation.

The thought of the Word of God encompasses a wide range of God's great actions. It was, after all, the Word of God through which the heavens were made. His Word is fundamentally creative:

Hebrews 11:3: Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The Bible is the Book of God, and we have every reason to be moved by its explosive power, as in:



Hebrews 4:12: For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Bible summons us to take “*earnest heed to the things which we have . . .*” :

Hebrews 2:1: Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

The Bible focuses on the greatest theme in the universe, and that is *human life and its redemption from the power of satan*. It takes us on a march thru the history of God's foundation, to laying the work with the Jews, to the sin-offering of Christ on the Cross, and to the end of history before the throne of Judgment.

All Scripture is dominated by the Person of Christ Jesus. Moses and Psalms and the Prophets had Him as their central theme. He requires our worship and our trust which can only result from our complete surrender to Him. He will completely change our lives so we are no longer bond slaves to passion, sin, and satan, but will have a glorious liberty which is in Christ. The world needs the Saviour, and true leadership of our ministers will proclaim Him faithfully.

A weak pulpit will convey a weak, insipid Christ which is not found in the Bible.

We need a Saviour Who takes the burden of our sin and guilt upon Himself, and Who reconciles us back to God. I want the Saviour proclaimed as He is proclaimed by the apostles — the men who received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ — Who died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and is at the right Hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us.



Preachers who speak this way know what men really need. And they know further that this generation doesn't need any more of what they are getting from the entertainment industry today which caters to their lower desires. Preachers who know the real issues today know that men need most to hear the Word of God — the living and true Jehovah. Then, they must hear what it means to live in accordance and in response to God's Grace every day of your life here on earth. That kind of message can bring redemption, hope, and peace! It can lift individuals to new levels of a glorious experience of Salvation thru the Blood of Christ. It can lift up nations to regain their sense of virtue and honor. It is a message that can be helpful right now, when we need God to help so very badly.

This job of being a minister of Jesus Christ is no simple one. It requires the very best in us; and the best God can be permitted by us to put with us. Some churches and ministers are shut tight to the realities of this Age, and so hidebound in theories that they are of little help to us now.



The Bible brings us to grips with peoples' needs, problems, and perplexities — and thank God, it has the answer to our greatest, as well as our simplest, needs.

I am examining myself before God to make sure I am not following the spirit of this Age more than the Spirit of the Living God. I want each message to be governed solely by the Bible and its Author.

If you are among them who are crying out for spiritual leadership, be sure to follow those who have been captured by the vitality of God's Word and God's precious Holy Spirit.

If you are now in a church where the message seems weak and without vitamins, then start looking until you find a preacher of the Word of God who is listening to the Lord, first and foremost! Herein lies the true religion versus the false and corrupt, of which Jesus warned us in His very first prophecy in Matthew 24 on the signs of the times and of the last days at the end of the Dispensation of Grace.

Matthew 24:11: And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

Matthew 24:23-27:

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

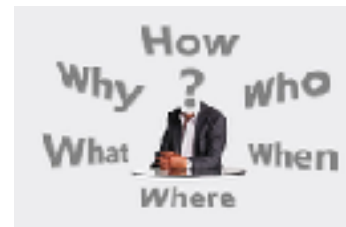
25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be.

This issue you must resolve in your own heart is: Whom will *you* serve — the false gods of this world, or Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God? As Elijah put it to the Israelites:

1 Kings 18:21: And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.



There is no question more important. [Whom will you follow?](#) That is what the Bible is all about.

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