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AS A SNARE SHALL IT COME

Jewel van der Merwe

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. Luke 21:34 - 36

In the preceding newsletter (*God Doesn't Need Networks*), I discussed rapidly occurring changes in society and in the church. Little did I suspect that changes would occur at the alarming rate they now are. Political futurists such as Newt Gingrich and Al Gore are preparing the world for a new civilization. The latest advances in technology are making many corporate and blue collar jobs obsolete, as well as forever changing how we perform even the most mundane of tasks.

"Students at MIT's Media Lab have invented a way to use the human body to transmit data. . . what this means is that paper money, telephones and other items will become obsolete.

Imagine having a doorknob that can sense who you are and open when it recognizes your image. . . we can transmit bits through the body. You can load your finger into a machine and have the money transferred into your finger.

*At the dry cleaners, instead of writing a check, a customer could use a finger as a debit card.
...many of these things already are in use. . . Everyone. . needs to*

revamp the way business - and thinking about the way business is done. . .

. . . the planet is going through the biggest transformation since the enlightenment and the industrial revolution. "It's a new society' that's changing everything." (Detroit Free Press May 1, 1996 Brains in the Forecast reporting on a day long event hosted by a Detroit accounting firm for 960 executives who each paid \$1000 to hear Alvin Toffler, Nicholas Negroponte and Gary Hamel).

As society is transformed by ever growing computer technologies and link-ups, so the church is undergoing a transformation that is making the Scriptures ever more applicable to the Church today!

Networking in the Church. Emerging on the church scene is a complex networking system. Parachurch organizations are weaving connections that mesh different networks together. This complex networking system is being developed in order for each entity to flow from one to another, then into one mighty river. The church is rapidly creating its own world system that is composed of networking units that are densely interrelated, and functioning like the neurons in the brain.

This is being accomplished by a networking computer system that has set a goal to have a data bank of every person living on planet earth. Does this sound absurd?

Already solidly in place is The Global Mapping Project. A 1986 MISSIONS FRONTIER magazine reported that they were going *"to bring into operation a worldwide information gathering processing, and communication system so that the Body of Christ around the world can have the most accurate, up-to-date and understandable picture possible-of itself (the 'harvest force'), and of the world's countries, peoples and societies (the 'harvest fields')."*

This is accomplished by a computerized mapping system called GLOBE which *"consists of computer software and hardware that will allow us to take hold of almost any type of information - about the world as a current status of work among the remaining unreached whole, or about any small part of it - and display that peoples.*

There are many networks feeding into what I call the Global Mind. Ministry after ministry has already handed over their carefully documented lists. Task forces have been busy canvassing neighborhoods. For example, one minister, Dick Eastman, (of Every Home for Christ) reaffirms his ministry's intent to visit every home among a people, particularly the nearly 2,000 peoples targeted by Joshua Project 2000. They have taken the words of Christ of Matthew 24:14 and interpreted them to mean that the gospel must be proclaimed in every home. This project, detailed in its data about every home, is also tied in to the "Global Mind". Yes, every home!

"It is interesting to note that the only fully accurate way to measure that the gospel has gone 'reasonably' to every person of a nation or an unreached people group is to go exactly where the people live, systematically, to each dwelling (oikos) while keeping an exact record

of where you are going and where you have been.” Joshua Project 2000, MISSIONS FRONTIERS, Nov.

Dec. 1995, Vol. 17, Num. 11-12. (Joshua Project 2000 was launched in Colorado Springs at a Gathering of 262 Global Christian Leaders from 77 countries.)

It seems to be very important to have all the information on the global networking system intact in order to avoid duplication. The question is asked, *“Where are we in our progress to complete the Great Commission? This information is not only important for the strategic focus of global prayer, but it is also crucial to mission agencies so they can avoid duplicating each other’s efforts.”* Ibid.

If there are too many mission teams in one area there is a fear that there might be competition for the converts – which would cause confusion! Therefore with a Global Mind, *“this data will then be synthesized and sent back electronically every month to each AAP [Adopt-A-People] Campaign around the world as well as to major mission researchers. . . This means that each month they would have completely updated global database on the current status of work among the remaining unreached people.”* MISSION FRONTIERS, July–Aug., 1995, Vol. 17, Num. 7-8.

The Global Mapping Project is bringing the very latest computer technology to bear on mission research. They believe that without this information:

“the Church will fail to go into some harvest fields, and will come empty-handed out of others . . . and we will not be able to correctly identify people groups, or understand them well enough to effectively evangelize them.”

It is thought that without having all the *“right information, in the right form, at the right place, at the right time, our goals and objectives won’t be realistic, our plans and methodologies won’t be effective, our allocation of resources won’t be wise or adequate, and nor will our evaluations be timely and accurate.*

Having an effective means for garnering, managing and communicating information is a prerequisite to ‘finishing the task’ . . . we can have unity in diversity if we are functioning from the same knowledge base. . .” MISSIONS FRONTIERS, Aug. 1986, Vol. 8, Num. 8.

For many years, earnest young people have loved to go on summer missions projects to assist missionaries in the field. Today, many of these young people are on the mission field, actively data-gathering for input into the global mind.

Even the various people and ministries involved in the “Renewal” have a web-site (GRMI.org). They state: *Our mission is to serve and support the emerging global Church involved in the current move/work of the Spirit of God. Our focus is to provide networking and facilitate resource distribution to the church in the midst of renewal. . . We envision the emergence of a strategic and active network of churches, church leaders and participants, working together to reach the nations. In this regard, the mail lists, web pages and other projects are geared to support specific areas of ministry which we see vital to the emergence of a unified (not suggesting we will all agree all the time) global church. . . .* “Mission Statement – Global Resource Ministries, Inc. Jan. 1996.

It leaves one to wonder how the early church accomplished anything at all, without computers, technology, and linking up, yet it was said that they turned the world upside down.

Denominations Finished? The day of departmental organization (or denominations) is over. This is what the organizers of the first post-denominational conference proclaim. C. Peter Wagner hosted this conference at the Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena, California, in May of this year.

This conference was to initiate the standard that the church will follow for the next millennium. Organizers believe the structure that God is developing for the new church government is based on the office of the Apostle.

With the restoration of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher gifts of Ephesians 4: 11. the Body of Christ is beginning to come to maturity. But only when the office of the apostle is restored can there be the fullness of Jesus the Apostle (Heb. 3: 1) within His people. The church can never be considered complete or fully matured until we see a manifestation of apostles coming forth.

We live in a critical hour. There needs to be a demonstration in this generation of the ministry of the apostle with miraculous, prophetic power and world-changing productivity. When the apostles begin to arise by the thousands, we will be able to take the nations for Jesus Christ. The harvest cannot be brought in apart from this foundational office. In an answer to the Spirit's cry to "restore!", we are seeing the Father raise up a new generation of apostles and apostolic people to take their place in the earth and make their invaluable contribution to the work of God. This requires a fresh anointing and people who are willing to embrace something new while building on and cleaving to the landmarks and foundations of yesterday. It will require experienced men of anointing and integrity to set the pace for dominion in this hour. . . apostolic-prophetic pacesetters nationwide are uniting to plant and strengthen churches through this Network of covenant relationships. A Global Network, Antioch Churches & Ministries.

God has graciously led Discernment Ministries in a peculiar way. It started as a Watchman Ministry, a result of being very concerned about things being prophesied by ministers that CHARISMA magazine featured on its cover. In 1989 we realized that the teachings that were predominant in the Latter Rain were again being revived. At that time I wrote the following letter to our leaders in the Assemblies of God from which is quoted in part:

"The latest move in the Charismatic world is the 'restoration' of the Prophets and Apostles. Prophet schools are being held across the country with many of them inviting Assemblies of God pastors to attend to participate in what they purport God is restoring to the Church in the end-time.

. . . This matter has distressed me greatly. . . we have spent hours transcribing tapes from these prophets. Assemblies all over the country are going to be affected by what is happening because of the mass media exposure and massive conferences are already being planned for the near future. Well-known personalities have already thrown in their lot. We can not bury our head in the sand and pretend this does not exist. I am listing some of the things I find the most ominous of these new teachings:

1. *Denominational Walls break -literally. They are determined that denominational walls are going to come down in the face of the "new thing" that God is doing. They believe that denominations must be disbanded.*

2. *Elect Generation. The children are the Elect Generation. They are the New Breed and will obtain immortality. They are referred to as the "perfect seed- line chosen to be born in this generation "*

Latter Rain teaching is all about a mighty end-time army made up of "anointed" prophets and apostles who will lead the church in a militant form of evangelism. They will destroy all opposition - thus one can understand why we all too often hear that we can not question this new move, and "touch thou not God's anointed".

In 1948 the Latter Rain movement began in Western Canada as a response to the complacency of the time. A teaching evolved that emphasized extreme congregationalism with local authority committed to a restored order of apostles who, through receiving a special dispensation derived from the laying on of hands, could in turn dispense a variety of spiritual gifts.

At the 1950 General Council of the Assemblies of God, a resolution was adopted disapproving of certain practices of the Latter Rain movement. The practices were:

- . An overemphasis relative to imparting, identifying, bestowing or confirming gifts by the laying on of hands and prophecy.
- . The erroneous teaching that the Church is built upon the foundation of present-day apostles and prophets.
- . The extreme teaching as advocated by the "New Order" regarding the confession of sin to man and deliverance as practiced, which claims prerogatives to human agency which belong only to Christ.
- . The extreme and unscriptural practice of imparting or imposing personal leadings by the means of gifts of utterance.

By the early 1950s the movement began to lose its steam, but has changed its name and leadership and is now moved in to die mainstream. The group today that lines up the closest with the Latter Rain is the "Restoration" movement. The Restorationists believe that the times of restoration began:

1517 . Justification by faith restored (Martin Luther)

1524. Water Baptism restored (Anabaptists)

1600s . Emphasis on spiritual life restored (Pietistic Movement)

1750 . Holiness restored. (Wesley)

1800s . Healing restored (Dowie)

1900 - Baptism in the Holy Spirit restored

1906 - Spiritual gifts and ministries

1948 . Laying on of hands and spontaneous praise.

It is very important to note that:

The main doctrines that the movement seeks to restore today are 'unity, praise and worship, prophecy, laying on of hands, gifts of the Spirit, offices and ministries, government and authority, and discipline and order.

"Many like the idea of a 'restored' first century church with apostles and prophets giving fresh revelations from God. Others are mobilized by the militant thrill of casting down principalities and territorial spirits to liberate a whole city through strategic prayer evangelism. Yet most naively see this movement as being God's vehicle for bringing about a God-honoring united and/or 'purified' church." (THE PLUMBLINE. Vol. 1, No.2. June-July. 1996).

According to what is considered 'present day truth', great emphasis is placed on praise. It is to be patterned after the Old Testament form - especially that of King David. Teachings about the "Tabernacle of David" or the "Key of David" abound in Restoration theology.

"The fact that David could abandon himself before God in praise was the key 'that opened the door for him to an understanding and comprehension of numerous spiritual subjects and even experiences in God which were closed to other' ". A Biblical View of Restoration by David K. Blomgren. (Emphasis added)

This abandonment type of worship has been brought in to many churches over the last 20 - 25 years. Recently, it has had the "spiritual warfare" flavor added, as it is believed that any individual act, done corporately, effects change in the spiritual realm. Example - 'all shout together to break satan's hold'.

Music has taken fundamental, Bible believing, Christians from a solid biblical base deep into Latter Rain teachings. Music leaders unwittingly have been trained to take the unknowing congregation into an "Alpha" state (bypassing the mind). In that state, judgment is pacified and you are no longer able to discern or resist false teaching. The pleasant, tranquil footings that you feel, you believe to be "the Presence of God".

The Worship Leader has the task of taking the congregation from the world to the Throne Room. This is usually accomplished by making the congregation stand for long periods of time, singing carefully selected choruses shown on large overhead screens.

The first step is to get rid of excess energy, (to rid ones self of worldly cares, so to speak), so fast, peppy choruses are sung and the energy is channeled as a group dynamic develops. The congregation must become one, i.e., relate as a group. Together they recognize the Presence

of God. The choruses can be very scriptural. Many readers here will have a difficult time understanding what I am saying because they have become so "conditioned" on what equates the Presence of God. The actual entering in to the Throne Room experience becomes hypnotic and pleasurable. However, you have been led there by a human mediator. It is hard to acknowledge that you are being manipulated each step of the way, because your experience is so real to you. It is important to understand that you do not have to go down a mystical path and have a subjective feeling to "know" you are in the Presence of the Lord. You do not have to be put in touch with your feelings to understand God.

If this were 20 years ago, I personally would have gone along with the "flow" of things to reach a certain objective, because I did not see the full picture and understand the Scriptures, even though I was in the ministry and thought I was a mature Christian. I did not realize how cleverly the church was being seduced. It is only by the grace of God - through His Word ministered in honesty by true "prophets" of God, that I have come to understand and in understanding have a burning desire to warn others of the Web of Deceit that is being thrown over the whole earth.

Restoration teaching has a strong emphasis on "spiritual covering" through which they believe God ordains His channel of authority. The leaders hear from God for the benefit of the people. In many local churches, new members must undergo foundation classes on Restoration doctrine. Afterwards, the members are instructed to only speak what they have been taught. When questioned about their beliefs, instructed members may only present the church's position and never question it publicly. This is supposed to help in the unity of the church as all members are to have one purpose and one vision - that of the leadership. . . Any who are rebellious (that is, any who question or ask for further explanation) are not to be tolerated.

This type of position lends itself easily to people who are anxious to follow any new "restored" truth for fear that they will be missing out on what God has in store.

The basic message of Latter Rain/Restorationists today is: *Christians must release the Spirit of God into the kingdoms of this world through prayer, which will cause these Satanic kingdoms to crumble. Then, as the earth faces certain ruin, Christians should be ready with solutions to the World's problems. The Body of Christ, as it becomes united in the truth that Jesus is Lord, will overcome the power of Satan and subdue the world, bringing the times of restoration spoken of in the book of Acts. Until the Body of Christ is in perfect unity, and has restored all the earth to its original state, Jesus is said to be 'held in the heavens.'* *The doctrine of the rapture is absurd to these folk. Instead of waiting for the heaven, to part and the trumpet to sound, the church is urged to prepare for a spiritual battle and get ready to overcome the world.*

Christians have been "networking" and forming a strong political base in the last decade. They have come out of hiding and feel that they have a momentum. So, who needs a rapture? We are in control! We've taken back from Satan what is ours! Let's not give up the world to Satan. Let's do Spiritual Warfare. We want to fight, subdue the earth, be in control and present the kingdom to God - then (and only then) Jesus can return. This message is spreading like wild fire throughout the earth! (And to think that some ministers claim they'd rather have wild fire than no fire at all!)

This teaching is fraught with political ramifications. Consider again the evidence of the strategy for missions to go to a city, study the background, data-bank each home/family, determine the history and input the information in the Global Mind! Staggering! Sobering!

People Profiles have been put together by anthropologists, sociologists and linguists in the past for the CIA, KGB etc. The purpose was to find a rallying point, a cultural vulnerability that runs through the social group to purportedly understand what has symbolic importance. This knowledge could be exploited for the purpose of mass manipulation. The symbol is then used, but its meaning changed. The familiar symbol is then used to move the attire population in a different direction.

For example the CIA ordered "People Profiles" on Japan at the end of WW 2. They advised the U.S. Government to keep the Emperor in power as a "symbol" but put in place the government that they wanted. One must ask, at this point, what will be the result of the data-gathering being done by the church? If the Church plans on presenting the kingdom to God, and hence inviting Jesus to return, and yet Scripture is very clear that Christ will present to Himself. Bride without spot or wrinkle, then isn't the time ripe for the appearance of someone else? The void will beg to be filled.

Take earnest heed to these words:

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God; or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? II Thess. 2:2-5.

This scripture is referring to a revealing of the son of perdition (total ruin, destruction and eternal death). When he is revealed, he will exalt himself as God.

This scripture is not telling us there will be a great revival. It would be pleasant to "go with the flow" and have everybody's favor. It is not easy to warn about a great end-time deception. Where are the men of God that should be warning people about the deception that has power and signs and lying wonders? In the face of what lies ahead, our leaders should be encouraging us to "stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught". Instead, those that are attempting to hold fast to that which they have been taught, are despised, railed upon and in some instances forced to leave their church. Pastors brazenly stand in the pulpit and challenge anyone to disagree with the latest so-called "move". The billy club, "touch thou not God's anointed" is used unmercifully to justify the leadership surfing the latest wave. Some pastors will even go as far as to say, "you are crucifying the Lord afresh if you reject this 'anointing'."

This is not the time to use historical precedents to justify weird manifestations and abnormal practices. Scripture must instead be taught as never before. Those leaders who have been seasoned and have a proven track record must not be ashamed! We have been set up. When this present "wave" started, so-called "prophets" were "prophesying" that the "old order brethren would stand in the way of the 'new thing' that God was going to do". The present "wave" has taken on hurricane-like proportions. What started as a drink at Joel's place has become a roaring river. This river is not the river from the Throne Room of Revelation 22: 1; it is polluted and will corrupt the souls who are not heeding the pure Word of the Almighty God. Not too many seem to be concerned with damage control as false teaching has lulled the church into a false sense of complacency.

The return of the "mystery religions": This is becoming widespread as various cultures are being "redeemed" by "identificational repentance." Gatherings are taking place to bring all the tribes together, each with their cultural accoutrements, no matter how steeped in idolatry and ritualistic some of these trappings have been.

Latter Rain teaching states that the Bride of Christ will grow to maturity as the Body is healed. This identificational repentance is believed to be the means of healing and maturing the Bride of Christ. The mature Bride of Christ will learn rulership under the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher. These are the ones through whom God will give the messages of direction. The messages given by "oversight" are not to be judged i.e., the pastor would not be accountable to the congregation. They must follow without question! The scriptural command to judge all prophecies to prove whether they are of God, is circumvented.

There is true apostolic succession that can be discerned in history. Our lack of historical perspective is one of the great debilitating weaknesses of the modern church. We lack authority because, unlike the Lord; we have not been baptized by those who have gone before us. That is, we have not been immersed in their message so as to discern the continuum of God's purpose. Everyone tries to point to the Scriptures and claim to preach and walk in the apostolic path, but if we truly were in this path we would lament the absence of apostolic power and life in the church today. Apostolic power and life will be restored to the church, but it first requires a restoration of the spiritual fathers to the children and the children to the spiritual fathers - in God's continuum. THE MORNING STAR JOURNAL. Vol 3, No.2. The Spirit of Elijah and Spiritual Fathers by Paul Cain and Rick Joyner.

It is also believed that "taking the kingdom" must be done by a revolutionary church. The kingdoms of the world including government, finance, arts, sports, medicine, science and education must begin to realize that the Church has the solutions for all the problems. The church must become the Overcomer! The world will see Jesus in the flesh when He manifests Himself through thousands of saints simultaneously around the world. Bill Britton said:

Beloved, it is people in human, flesh bodies who shall conquer this world and defeat Satan. . Jesus defeated Satan and overcame him for us and put all of hell's forces to an open shame. And He did this in a flesh body. Since He is the Head of the Body, it is now in order for the Body to follow in the pattern which He has set for us. . This Body of Christ, the Overcomer, shall come forth in mighty power to manifest the /illness of Christ in the earth. They are

known as the Manifested Sons of God, and this place they occupy is the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Jesus, the Pattern Son, pp. 36-40).

Man is striving to do God's work for Him. A true "move of God" can not be orchestrated. God is merciful and will always meet hungry souls who turn to Him. Yet, today there is a UNITY pulling the church together into a monstrous creation that will soon be out of control of even its creators. Those that have jumped on the "unity" bandwagon anxious for church growth are going to be stupefied with where they find themselves as the new millennium approaches.

There have been "buzzwords" to chart the church on its course for the new millennium. "Break down the walls", "paradigm shift", "facilitators" are becoming commonly heard terms. These concepts are tempering the church into a unified doctrine. When the tempering is complete, true Christians will be labeled "heretics".

If you haven't checked out the word "Catholic" lately, remember it does mean UNIVERSAL. With that thought in mind, consider the following from the Second Vatican Council.

Nevertheless our separated brethren whether considered as 'individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those to whom He has given new birth into one body, and whom He has quickened to newness of life - that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. During its pilgrimage on earth, this people, though still in its members liable to sin, (The papal addition 'in its members' avoids the theological issue of whether the Church as such is liable to sin) is growing in Christ and is guided by God's gentle wisdom, according to His hidden designs, until it shall happily arrive at the fullness of eternal glory in the heavenly Jerusalem.

*Today in many parts of the world, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The sacred Council exhorts, therefore, all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism. THE TEACHINGS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. **The Complete of the Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations. Introduction by Gregory Baum, O.S.A. The Newman Press, Westminster, NY 1966.***

There is a trend in the Unity Move. Latter Rain/Restoration doctrines are flooding in to the church through PromiseKeepers and many other organizations that are now flowing together with no regard to doctrine. The walls are quickly coming down.

If one assumes that the first priority of the Church is now unity, then a common core of doctrine now exists. There is a historical precedent, that of the Roman Catholic Church in which the global Church became the final authority in matters of doctrine, thereby creating a "unity" in the church by enforcing "uniformity" of doctrine. . . The move for City-wide

elders will supplant the local church with a city board of elders who can alone intervene into any churches that are not "Christian" or any church matters deemed worthy of investigation and punishment. - Sarah Leslie (Christian Conscience)

It is quite easy to see that if this happens, those of us who are Word-based Christians may no longer be back to Jesus alone considered a "Christian".

There is another gospel being preached. When experience takes precedent over truth, it will not be long before the church loses its zeal and the Light goes out.

Note the following from the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 129.

460. *The Word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature' "For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man; so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God." "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods. "*

We are living in serious days.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. Amos 8:11, 12.

The Lord in His mercy has given us His Word as the Standard that we might be able to stand in this day. Let us cleave to His Truth - His Matchless Word.

The following beautiful reminder came over the Internet recently:

IT'S TIME TO GET BACK TO JESUS ALONE... By Jim May

*When you can't figure out whether to sit at His feet, walk in a manner worthy of His call, stand in battle, or nm the race with diligence, **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When you can't even remember: the twenty-two characteristics of a good wife or husband, the seven steps of appeal to authority, the eight things to do when you are worried; or the nine ways of love, **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When the proof of authority is "they say" and they say to have faith, just trust, let go and let God and they say just find the sin and repent, and they say just love, have joy, receive peace, and pray, And who can't figure out who "they are, **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When you hear it's pre-, mid-, post-, or pan-, don't take the "mark", it's "time, times and half a time, " and you can't get through the next hour. **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When you hear testimonies of others: raising the dead, praying all night, fasting forty days, leading thousands to the Lord, and memorizing the entire Bible and you hear it through someone who hasn't done any of it, and they expect you to do it, and you feel obligated. **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When it's home school, Christian school, public school, the school of hard knocks or no school, and the discussion is heating up. **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When your critics have watched Christian TV all week and expect you to preach like Billy Graham, exercise faith like Kenneth Copeland, build glass monuments like Robert Schuller, heal like Oral Roberts, motivate like Norman Vincent Peale, and you don't slightly remember any of them. **It's time to get back to Jesus alone.....***

*When you are asked, "How's it going at your church?" and you know it means. "Ask me how it's going at mine," and you know you are about to hear about a huge explosion of numbers, miracles, radio broadcasts and seminars, and you feel like a failure. **It's time to get back to Jesus alone....***

*When you're overweight and feel like running by the mirror, and people are suggesting spas, running, jogging, cycling, swimming, weight watchers, triathalons, biathlons and trampolines, and you are out of breath just thinking about those things. **It's time to get back to Jesus alone. .***

It's time to separate His commands from Christian demand.

It's time to hear Him speak the Word,

It's time to simplify,

It's time/or one step at time,

It's time for that secret place with Him alone.

WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY

Opal Reddin

The purpose of this article is: (1) to show that God calls women to ministry; (2) to point to scriptural solutions for the distinctive problems women face in ministry; (3) to offer suggestions as to how the church can help women who have a genuine call to ministry.

Our sole authority must be the Word of God, immutable and infallible. To step off that solid rock is to sink into the quicksand of ever*shifting opinions of people. Both tradition and sociopolitical movements, valuable as they sometimes are, must be critically judged by the principles of the Bible.

Throughout the Old Testament the highest position of leadership was the prophetic office. It is significant that God placed several women in this office.

As we look at the prophetesses, we see a variety of life situations: Miriam was a single woman; Deborah and Huldah were married to men who were not prophets; Isaiah's wife, though married to a famous prophet, "was not kept from fulfilling a prophetic office in her own right." (*Joseph R.*

Flower, "Does God Deny Spiritual Manifestations and Ministry Gifts to Women"
Unpublished Paper (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Headquarters, 1979), p.8

In addition to her ministry as a prophetess, Miriam was also a musician and led in public worship (Exodus 15:20, 21). Deborah was a prophetess who was also the judge over Israel (Judges 4). She could have been the general of the army, but she chose to ask Barak to lead; together they led Israel in one of its greatest military victories resulting in 40 years of peace.

Huldah, a prophetess, was recognized as a Bible scholar. When the Word was found in the temple, King Josiah sent four to his officials to her for guidance. Under Huldah's God-given teaching, Josiah led Israel in one of the greatest revivals in Israel's history (2 Kings 22:8; 23:25).

Even though God used specify chosen women in ministry in the Old Testament, the general treatment of women fluctuated according to the degree of pagan influence. During the intertestamental period, Israel reached such a low point that one synagogue prayer had Jewish men thanking God that He had not made them a Gentile or a dog or a woman. Jesus' treatment of women was profoundly unique, revolutionary for His time - indeed for any time! He always treated them as persons of equal worth and importance with men.

It is significant that God chose as the mother of His Son a woman who was totally yielded to the Holy Spirit, speaking out in prophetic utterance the supremely beautiful Magnificat - Luke 1:46-56) and continuing in her commitment all the way to Pentecost (Acts 1:14; 2:1-8).

There is no greater or deeper theological teaching in all the New Testament than that given by Jesus to the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:5-26). His revelation as the Christ sent her running, forgetting her waterpots and she became an evangelist that day!

The first person to preach Jesus publicly after His birth was Anna the prophetess who "spoke of him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). The first person to see the risen Lord and to be commissioned by Him to proclaim His Resurrection (the crux of the gospel) was Mary Magdalene (John 20:17~18). It had to be for a specific purpose that Jesus would go contrary to what might be expected, by appearing first to Mary. The logical one to receive this signal honor would have been Peter, or John the beloved, or Mary His mother. But He chose Mary and commissioned her to go and tell. He has been calling women to go and tell the good news ever since.

Why did Jesus not choose women among the Twelve? There are many possible reasons; it may well be that He chose men for the same reason that He chose twelve, that he chose Jews only, and that He chose free men, not slaves. Jesus was ministering within the framework of Judaism; like Paul later. He did not break customs just for the sake of showing His freedom or authority. Many women accompanied Jesus and the Twelve in their preaching tours (Luke 8:2, 3).

The New Covenant. Every time we receive the elements of the Lord's Supper, we celebrate the new covenant. Jesus said, "This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood" (I Cor. 11:25). Since He was made a curse for us, He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13-29) and has brought equality "in Christ Jesus" to all races, classes, and both sexes (Gal. 3:28).

This does not revoke the headship of the husband in marriage which goes back to Creation (I Cor. 11:3, 9), but it makes possible the giving of gifts and ministries to all who are in the body of Christ, without discrimination. As one has well said, "If God saw fit to bestow a prophetic office upon women in Old Testament times, despite certain biases against women and limitations upon a public ministry for them, it would seem logical that they would be accorded greater privileges and opportunities under the new covenant of grace." (Ibid).

Pentecostal Distinctives. On the Day of Pentecost Peter announced that the door of ministry was open to all: "This is that which was spoken through the prophet, Joel. . . your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:16-18).

Many Bible scholars see Pentecost as the birth of the Church. Certainly we can say that believers were united and became visible as the Church on that day. The most common terminology used to describe the Church is the "body of Christ."

Extremely significant in the three principal passages depicting the body of Christ is that no sex distinction is made (Romans 12:1-8; I Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16). Where the word *man* appears in the English text, it is to be understood generically, for the Greek there is absolutely no sex distinction. All gifts and ministries are available for all people; in fact, all people are exhorted to desire them.

Positions Given to Women. Eph. 4:11 lists Christ's gifts of ministries to the Church: they are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These are persons with authorized leadership roles of ministry, receiving their income mainly from the church (Gal. 6:6). As we have seen, there is no sex distinction.

Early Church fathers support the Authorized Version which lists Junia as an apostle (Rom. 16:7) of the same order as Barnabas, Apollos, Epaphroditus, and others who were co-workers with Paul. Chrysostom called her "Junia, an apostle," and the following commentators, among others, have agreed with him: Luther, Calvin, Bengel, Olshausen, Tholuck, Alford and Jowett. (Ibid).

The four daughters of Philip were prophetesses (Acts 21:9), all women were encouraged to prophesy with the understanding that the gift might be so exercised as to be recognized (I Cor. 14:5, 21, 32). There have been genuine prophetesses throughout church history.

We have already noted the successful ministry of the woman in Samaria, the first evangelist to have a citywide crusade (John 4:28-42). Paul speaks of Euodia and Syntyche "who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:2,3). This describes evangelism.

The only person actually called "pastor" (*poimen*) in the New Testament is Jesus. Acts 20:17-28 shows that the terms "bishop," "elder," and "pastor" are interchangeable. It is possible that the terms "pastor" and "teacher" name one office, that of "pastor-teacher." Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, taught Apollos, an apostle (Acts 18:24-26, I Cor. 4:6-9). Regarding this husband-wife team, one scholar comments, "It is significant that in four of the six times they are mentioned, Priscilla's name stands first. This would not only indicate Paul's regard for her, but undoubtedly also the probability that she exceeded her husband in prominence and her ability to minister the Word." (Ibid).

Phoebe was a *diakonos* (Romans 16:1), an official position (I Tim. 3:13). Of the 22 times *diakonos* is mentioned in the Epistles, it is translated "minister" 18 times, "deacon" three times (actually not a translation but a transliteration), and "servant" once. There is no reason for ever translating it (in the Epistles) by any term other than "minister." Phoebe's role of leadership is also shown by the term *prostatis* ("succourer") which, according to Liddell and Scott, (Greek/English Lexicon) means one who is a leader or ruler; a front-rank person; one who exercises authority.

Procedures for Women Who are Called. The kind of person you are is as important as your professional preparation. You dare not wait until you are "perfect," but you must grow in grace. Here is a brief checklist.

1. Aspire to the beauty of *holiness*: the fruit of the Spirit comprise holiness (Galatians 5:22,23).
2. Be a lady - a gracious lady, "gracious woman retaineth honor" (Proverbs 11:16).
3. Maintain the best relationships possible with your family. Ministry begins at home.
4. Be disciplined in every area: devotions, budget, time, health, etc.

5. Your social life is important. Be friendly (Proverbs 18:24). Be discreet. Achieve a poise that enables you to be at ease with your colleagues, irrespective of sex.

6. Develop your sense of humor. Don't take yourself too seriously; no matter how anointed you are in ministry, you are still a very "earthen" vessel (2 Cor. 4:7).

7. Don't be overly aggressive; promotion comes from the Lord (Psalm 75:6,7). Never become part of a clique, complaining about discrimination against women. We are peacemakers.

8. Strive for balance.

9. Prepare for some failures and some successes. Listen to wise counsel.

10. Walk in the path of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Lord will allow our faith to be tested, but His "cloud by day and fire by night" will overshadow us as we walk obediently before Him. (Nehemiah 9: 19)

.One of the distinctives of Pentecost was the opening wide of the door for women to minister. Consider the cost to the Kingdom of not using all God-given ministry. When over 2 billion persons for whom Christ died have not heard the gospel, it is inexcusable to exclude any who are called of God to preach.

Realize the awesomeness of knowingly hindering one who is called of sovereign God. When Peter was taken to task by other apostles for fraternizing with the Gentiles, he said, "What was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). When women are called of God, the church should give them the same kind of encouragement men receive, for we are co-laborers with God.

In conclusion, we have seen from God's Word that it is His plan to place some women in the Body as ministers. Let us as Pentecostals continue to lead in this vital area, as we are led of the Holy Spirit. Maranatha!