

“THE POWERS THAT BE...”

PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD EXISTING GOVERNMENTAL POWERS

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke thee.’

But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves” (Jude 8-10).

The message throughout the Epistle of Jude is twofold:

- 1) Christians are exhorted *to earnestly strive* “for [with respect to] the faith.”
- 2) Christians are warned concerning apostasy manifested in the lives of those who, instead, *stand away* “from the faith.”

Verses three and four introduce this message, verses five through seven form examples to illustrate that which has been introduced, and verse eight continues within the framework of teachings set forth in verses three through seven:

“Likewise [in like manner to the individuals previously mentioned in the examples] also these filthy dreamers [those in verse four] defile the flesh [cf. v. 7], despise dominion [cf. v. 6], and speak evil of dignities [cf. v. 5].”

Proper and improper attitudes toward dignitaries are then given in verses nine and ten.

A basic teaching throughout the entire passage, beginning with verse three, has to do with the governmental administration of the earth and with apostasy in relation to this administration. Christians are *to earnestly strive with respect to the faith in view of attaining the goal of their faith, the salvation of their souls* (1 Peter 1:9).

The realization of this salvation will follow the issues of the judgment seat of Christ and involves the placement of Christians in positions of power and authority as joint-heirs with Christ in His coming kingdom. Thus, Christians earnestly striving with respect to the faith is with a view to their occupying positions in the coming governmental administration of the earth following that time when “the kingdom of the world” has become “the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15, ASV).

Despising Dominion (v. 8)

Despising dominion refers back to the sin of the angels in verse six. The word “despise” is from a Greek word meaning to “set aside,” “disregard.” Angels in the kingdom of Satan “set aside,” “disregarded” their positions of power in the heavens and came to earth in the form of man for the specific purpose of cohabiting with members of the human race. These angels set aside the positions for which they had been created and involved themselves in something completely alien to their very existence.

This account has been recorded in Jude, allowing the Spirit of God to draw spiritual lessons from Jude, showing how Christians can, in like manner, despise dominion; and this dominion is the very same dominion which the angels despised. The Church has been brought into existence to occupy heavenly places, to fill positions of power and authority in the heavens as God’s firstborn son during the coming age; and these positions are the same positions presently being occupied by angels ruling from heavenly places in Satan’s kingdom.

Angels holding positions of power and author-

ity under Satan in the present kingdom of the heavens will continue to rule from this heavenly sphere until that day when they, along with Satan, are cast out of the heavens onto the earth. The Church will then be brought to the goal of its calling, and, as the bride of Christ, be placed in this heavenly realm and occupy these positions.

Christians have been saved with a view to their replacing the incumbent rulers in the heavens, and the warning in this passage concerns the present existing danger of Christians “setting aside” or “disregarding” their calling.

Angels apostatized in the past by standing away from the position for which they had been brought into existence; and Christians can, in like manner, apostatize during the present time by standing away from the position for which they have been brought into existence. Corruption, followed by judgment, was the inevitable outcome of this apostasy by angels; and corruption, followed by judgment, will also be the inevitable outcome of the same apostasy by Christians today.

Speaking Evil of Dignitaries (vv. 8-10)

Speaking evil of dignitaries in verse eight refers back to verse five and moves forward into verses nine and ten. The same word translated “speak evil” in the Greek text of verse eight is also used in verses nine and ten (*blasphemeo*, the verb form, appears in vv. 8, 10; and *blasphemia*, the noun form, appears in v. 9). The word is translated “railing accusation” in verse nine and rendered, once again, as “speak evil” in verse ten.

This is the Greek word from which the English word “blasphemy” is derived; and the translation, “railing accusation,” in verse nine actually captures the thought expressed by the word somewhat better than the translation, “speak evil,” in verses eight and ten.

Railing accusations, emanating from unbelief on the part of the people of Israel in the historical account covered by verse five, were directed against Moses. However, by so doing, *the people were actually*

directing these railing accusations against God Himself.

Moses was the one whom God had chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the land covenanted to Abraham and his posterity through Isaac and Jacob. *His power and authority were of Divine origin*; and, consequently, accusations leveled against the leadership of Moses were, in actuality, *accusations leveled against God Himself.*

The people of Israel who questioned Moses' authority, seeking to appoint a new leader and return to Egypt, *were questioning the very authority of God vested in Moses* (cf. Num. 14:2, 27).

Because of this sin, resulting from unbelief concerning their ability to go into the land as God had commanded, judgment fell upon the people of Israel. They could no longer enter the land under Moses and realize the purpose for their salvation from Egypt. *They had fallen away, apostatized, in such a manner that it was impossible to renew them again unto repentance* (cf. Heb. 6:4-6).

As a result, during the next thirty-eight and one-half years, the entire generation — murmuring against Moses, and thus against the Lord — *perished in the wilderness.*

Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and those who followed them constitute another similar example (Num. 16:1ff). They rose up against Moses and Aaron in matters concerning their authority — Moses as leader of the people, and Aaron as high priest in the camp. When this occurred, Moses “fell upon his face” (v. 4). Moses knew that Korah and those with him were questioning, not just his and Aaron's authority, but *the authority of God.*

This rebellion against authority led to unacceptable incense being offered upon the altar at the door of the tabernacle by two hundred fifty prominent men who had sided with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses. This, in turn, led to God's judgment on the entire group. God exhibited his wrath upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram by opening a chasm in the earth and causing them, along with “all that appertained unto them [their wives, children (save Korah's sons; cf. Num. 26:11, 58)],” to go down into *Sheol* alive:

“And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

They, and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into the pit [‘into *Sheol*’], and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation” (Num. 16:32, 33).

A fire then came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred fifty men which had offered the incense upon the altar (v. 35).

Immediately after the destruction of Korah and those following him, the people of Israel again murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, “Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” *Again, as before, this was a murmuring not only against Moses and Aaron but against God.*

God was the One Who had performed the execution of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their families, and the two hundred fifty men offering incense. *And because of this same sin of murmuring against Divinely established authority,* God sent a plague into the camp of Israel. This was done so speedily that before Aaron had time to make an “atone-ment for the people,” standing “between the dead and the living,” fourteen thousand seven hundred Israelites perished (vv. 41-50).

According to Scripture, *it is a serious thing to murmur against, bring railing accusations against, those whom God has placed in positions of power and authority. Any rebellion against Divinely established authority is a rebellion against the Lord.* It was so during Moses' day, and it is no different during the present day.

“The powers that be are ordained of God,” whether during Moses' day or today. *ALL POSITIONS of power and authority are by Divine appointment.* And whosoever “resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [‘judgment’]” (Rom. 13:1, 2).

God rules in the kingdom of men and gives it “to whomsoever he will.” God is the One Who establishes rulers, and He is also the One Who removes rulers (Dan. 4:17, 25-32). “There is no power but of God” (Rom. 13:1), which today, in view of the

coming age, is vested in His Son.

Jesus told His disciples, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). In view of this, any rebellion against existing ordained powers — whether in the heavens or upon the earth — is a rebellion against the power vested in God's Son, which is simply a rebellion against Christ Himself.

Note the example given in Jude 9: Michael, the archangel, *WOULD NOT* bring a railing accusation against even Satan. He, knowing that *Satan held his position by Divine appointment and that Satan possessed no power but that which emanated from God,* would go no further than to simply say, “The Lord rebuke thee.”

Michael knew that *any accusation against Satan would be an accusation against the One Who had appointed him to this position, the One in whom all power and authority reside* (cf. I Sam. 24:8-10; II Sam. 1:2-16).

(The parallel section in II Peter 2:11 is expanded to include other angels and other dignitaries as well: “Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them [dignitaries] before the Lord.”)

Now, with all this in mind, *the particular apostate element existing in Christendom in the latter days — with its parallel drawn from experiences of individuals during the days of Moses — should be clear.*

Bringing railing accusations against those whom God has placed in positions of power and authority is a form of *apostasy.* It is that simple. Such reviling or railing against Divinely established authority is not only *standing away from* the God-ordained position which a Christian is to occupy, but, as well, *it is moving into a position wherein the apostate, in actuality, brings these accusations against the Lord Himself.* And through such accusations, these apostates, as “brute beasts...corrupt themselves” (Jude 10; cf. II Peter 2:12).