

A TIME FOR WHEAT, A TIME FOR TARES

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"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...." (Eccl. 3:1).

From Ecclesiastes chapter 3, we learn that the Creator has specific times and seasons for different things. We see this truth about times and seasons manifested in the life cycle, in human experience, in nature, in agriculture, and even in history. There was a specific time in history to conquer Canaan. It could not be done in Abraham's time, "for the iniquity of the Amorites [was] not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). There was a specific time in history when the Messiah was scheduled to come. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4).

In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Yeshua used agricultural truths to tell His disciples there was going to be a specific time in history for wheat, a specific time in history for tares, and a specific time

in history when the two would grow together, side by side, until the end of the age. The final harvest at the end of the age would separate the wheat from the tares. Here is the parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13:24-30).

Yeshua's disciples privately asked Him to explain this parable. His explanation was simple and straightforward:

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom: but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the

angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:37-42).

First there was to be a time for wheat. Yeshua, the Son of man, was going to scatter the children of the kingdom throughout the world. From the Book of Acts and from other historical documents, we know this happened in the first century as Yeshua's disciples traveled throughout the known world. But there was also a time for tares. The devil would sow his children among the wheat. The wheat and the tares would grow side by side, and not always be easily distinguishable from one another.

If you have even a basic knowledge about Church history, you should be able to see that this parable is a very succinct and accurate prophetic picture of what happened to the so-called Christian faith. Ever since the devil sowed the tares among the wheat, the Church has consisted of false brethren mingled among true brethren, children of the devil mingled among children of God, counterfeit Christians mingled among genuine disciples of Yeshua.

The mingling of seeds happened "while men slept" (Matt. 13:25). The Lord did not fall asleep, but His watchmen slept

and thus fulfilled the scripture "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa. 56:10).

Not all of the Lord's watchmen slumbered and slept. The Apostles of the first century were awake, alert, and aware of what was happening even in their own lifetime. Jude wrote about "certain men [who] crept in unawares," men who were "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4).

Peter warned that "there will be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies," and that "many shall follow their pernicious ways" (2 Pet. 2:1f).

Paul stated that in his time "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thes. 2:7). It is significant that this "mystery of iniquity" of which Paul wrote is translated "mystery of lawlessness" in the NASB, and "secret power of lawlessness" in the NIV, and "separating from *Torah*" in David Stern's JNT (Jewish New Testament). I normally dislike modern Bible translations, but I sometimes quote them when they help make my point. And my point here is that the tares bear a fruit called "lawlessness," or, as Stern translates it, "separating from *Torah*."

The Greek text of 2 Thessalonians 2:7 says *musteriou ede energetai tes anomias*. The "mystery" is *musteriou*; "already" is *ede*; "working" is *energetai* (cp. English

"energized"). And the fruit "of lawlessness" is *tes anomias*.

The Greek word *anomias* (written *anomos* in lexicons, in its nominative form) is a very significant word. When the Jews translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek approximately two centuries B.C. (the Septuagint), they used the Greek word *nomos* to translate the Hebrew word *Torah*. The word *nomos* is usually translated "law" in English New Testaments.

So *nomos* is "law." What then does *anomos* mean? In Greek the *a-* prefix means "no, not, without," just as it does in some English words (*atheist, atypical, asexual, etc.*). Therefore the Greek word *anomos* means "without law; lawless" when used as an adjective. Because Greek is an inflected language, sometimes it takes the form *anomia* or *anomian*, "lawlessness," when used as a noun.

You may be familiar with our English words *anomial* and *anomialism*, or *antinomial* and *antinomialism*. The 1828 Webster's Dictionary defines an antinomial this way: "one of a sect who maintain, that, under the gospel dispensation, the law is of no use or obligation; or who hold doctrines which supersede the necessity of good works and a virtuous life."

At the end of this definition, Webster adds: "This sect originated with John Aricola about the year 1538." Maybe the ripe fruit of antinomialism appeared around 1538, but the seeds were sown in the first century, while the Apostles

were still alive. In Paul's lifetime there was already an anti-Torah energy (*energetai*) at work. The tares were energized and springing to life among the wheat.

In some places the tares were overrunning, overpowering, and even supplanting the wheat. John wrote about "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence." Diotrephes refused to receive the Apostles, John said. John added, "and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 9f). So this domineering Diotrephes not only rejected the Apostles' authority, he also refused to receive the brethren, and forbade others in the church from receiving the brethren, and cast the brethren out of the church. This raises an important question: If the true brethren were cast out of the church, then who were the people who remained in the church with Diotrephes? Well, they certainly were not true brethren, so the only possible conclusion is that they were false brethren. This church congregation consisted entirely of tares. It makes one wonder how many times and in how many other places this process was repeated.

"Daniel, are you suggesting that the tares are anomians?" Yes. The Lord said that at the end of the age, when the angels are reaping the harvest and separating the tares from the wheat, that they will gather out of His kingdom "them

which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41). The Greek word translated "iniquity" in the KJV is *anomian*, "lawlessness." The NASB translates it "those who commit lawlessness." Stern's JNT says "people who are far from *Torah*."

Therefore, according to the Greek text, the tares who grow alongside the wheat are antinomians, i.e., people "who maintain, that, under the gospel dispensation, the law is of no use or obligation." That sounds ominously similar to statements I have heard from some Christian preachers and laymen.

Many Christians, even some Messianics, talk about how there is going to be a future "falling away" in the Church shortly before the end of the age. But I submit to you that the great falling away already happened (or at least started to happen) a long time ago, because according to 2 Thessalonians 2, where we get the term "falling away," the falling away is described as "the mystery of iniquity," or "the secret power of lawlessness," a secret power that was "already at work," already energized, at the time when Paul wrote those words.

In the late 1980s I was a teacher at Western Illinois University. The university's library had an extensive collection of the writings of the so-called "Church Fathers" and other early Christian writings. During my time there, I spent an extended period of time reading and studying about early Christian history.

One historian's remark especially struck me. I cannot recall which historian said this, but he pointed out that we have a lot of written documents to provide us with information about the disciples of Jesus in the first century. We have the New Testament, of course, where we see a Torah-honoring Messianic Community that welcomes Gentile believers "in the synagogue every sabbath day," where they learn the Torah (Acts 15:21). Josephus and other Jewish and Roman writings provide additional information about the first-century disciples of Jesus.

But from the end of the first century to around the late second century, we do not have a whole lot of historical documents to tell us what happened in the Church. We know what the first-century Apostles taught. Then we have about a century of relative silence, at least in regards to changes taking place in the Church. And then all of a sudden the so-called "Church Fathers" emerge on the scene, proclaiming themselves to be the successors of the original Apostles, but teaching doctrines quite different from the doctrines which were taught by the Apostles. What happened?

One of the books I read in the 1980s was *From Christ to Constantine* by M.A. Smith, published in 1971 by Inter-Varsity Press, a mainstream Christian publisher. In regards to the relative scarcity of historical documents from the second century, M.A. Smith said:

"Many stories come in versions so distorted that it is hard to decide whether the principal characters were worthy successors to the apostles, or the devil's own agents. Perhaps their contemporaries were as uncertain as we are" (pg. 14).

Around 1990 I wrote a lengthy article, *The Ghost of Marcion*, which I printed in booklet form. I no longer have it available in printed form, but the article is posted on a few Messianic web sites. Just Google the title and my name, and you can probably find it online. (It is not posted on my GOE web site because I don't know how to get it there, because I'm technologically challenged. Let's be honest. I'm not just technologically challenged or technologically disabled, I'm technologically retarded.)

For the benefit of readers who do not have access to the internet, here are some paraphrased highlights from the article (sources are all annotated in footnotes in the original article):

The heretic Marcion taught that the entire Old Testament should be rejected because it belonged to an evil, inferior god, and not to the God revealed by Jesus. Marcion was very anti-Jewish; therefore he also rejected any New Testament writings which spoke favorably of things that Marcion considered to be "Jewish." As M.A. Smith notes, "Marcion started the trend which has had many followers right up to the present - if it doesn't suit the theory, excise it as spurious or an

interpolation."

Marcion's "Bible" consisted of only Luke's Gospel (minus the "Jewish" elements) and ten of Paul's epistles. Marcion taught that Paul was the only apostle who could be trusted.

Marcion's anti-Old Testament, pro-Paul churches spread throughout the Roman Empire and soon became a major threat to the Messianic faith. Historians say that Marcion's heresy died out around the fifth century. But did Marcion's heresy really die out? Or did the Church simply succumb to it and accommodate it and incorporate it, in a subdued form, into mainstream Christianity?

Of course Christian Bibles include the Law and the Prophets, but how much do Christians heed their instruction? The average Christian's attitude to the Law and the Prophets is a sure indication that the ghost of Marcion is very much alive in the Church today. If you doubt this, let us examine some things Marcion taught, and we will see that the spirit of Marcion still has a very strong influence on the Church today.

Marcion's most influential writing was *Antithesis*, a work which consisted of "contrasted statements arranged to prove the incompatibility of the law and the gospel." Tertullian wrote a lengthy work called *Against Marcion*. Tertullian called *Antithesis* "a work strained into making such a division between the Law and the Gospel as thereby to make two separate gods."

"Marcion sets up unequal gods," Tertullian wrote, "the one a judge, fierce and warlike, the other mild and peaceable, solely kind and supremely good."

Is this not what many Christians do? They shun the "Old Testament God" because He is too stern and fierce. They focus instead on the "New Testament God" who, in their minds, does not expect obedience to His laws.

Marcion's god "displays neither hostility nor wrath," he "neither condemns nor distrains," and "does not punish." He "is neither offended nor angry nor inflicts punishment... he is merely kind. Of course he forbids you to sin - but only in writing. It lies with you whether you consent to accord him obedience."

We are not *justified* by obeying God's law; we are justified by faith. But after we are justified, what are we supposed to do with God's commandments? Obey them or ignore them?

A spirit of lawlessness has been hanging over the Church for most of its history, thanks in large part to the work of the wicked heretic Marcion. Other second-century tares include the writer of *The Epistle of Barnabas*, an influential work that shows the general direction the Church was heading in its attitude to the Old Testament writings.

"The main theme of *Barnabas* is a spiritualization of the Mosaic law," notes one historian. "The writer holds that the Jews were wrong to take the Old Testament literally."

Everything in the Old Testament

was allegorized to give it a Christian meaning. Even the commandments were interpreted figuratively, because, according to *Barnabas*, "the law of Moses had never been meant to be taken literally." Even the dietary laws were understood not to be talking about food but about behavior.

In another second-century document, *Dialog With Trypho*, Justin Martyr tells of his discussion with the Jew Trypho. Trypho asks Justin why Christians do not obey Old Testament commandments, and expresses bewilderment when he tells Justin, "[You Christians] spurn the commands... and then try to convince us [Jews] that you know God, when you fail to do those things that every God-fearing person would do. If, therefore, you can give a satisfactory reply to these charges and can show us on what you place your hope, even though you refuse to obey the Law, we will listen to you most willingly, and then we can go on and examine in the same manner our other differences."

Justin dismisses Trypho's concerns and questions by saying that the law is "obsolete," "abrogated," "voided," and tells Trypho, "You understand all in a carnal way."

Justin and Trypho talk a bit about the existence of sects of Messianic believers who do keep the law. Justin obviously disagrees with them, but acknowledges their existence. One historian writes that "Jewish Christianity" was "a disturbing factor" until about the

fifth century. It is interesting that this is the very same time when historians claim that Marcion's heresy "died out." But it did not really die out. It was absorbed into the mainstream Church, in a modified, subdued form. Once that happened, Jewish Christianity was no longer "a disturbing factor" - not because commandment-keeping disciples of Jesus ceased to exist, but because they were so outnumbered that they could now be written off by the mainstream Church and dismissed as a fringe group. Thus they were no longer perceived as a threat.

The remainder of my *Ghost of Marcion* consists of seven guidelines for correctly understanding the writings of Paul. Maybe I'll print that in a future issue of GOE.

Some years ago a young man came to the GOE Outreach Center. He was familiar with the Sabbath, Feast Days, and dietary laws, because as a child he had been raised in the Worldwide Church of God. He was raised keeping the Sabbath and other appointed times, but now he was in a lively, exciting, Spirit-filled Pentecostal church, where they do not keep the Sabbath or Feasts or dietary laws.

He was somewhat troubled, because he *knows* which day is really the Sabbath, he *knows* about the Biblical calendar and dietary laws, he *knows* about Church history, he *knows* about the Church's decline into apostasy and its abandonment of the Torah, he *knows* about

Constantine and the changes he authorized, he *knows* that neither Jesus nor the Apostles authorized those changes that took place.

This young man told me he knows that if Christians really followed the Bible, they should be honoring the Torah the way that Messianic believers do. And yet he sees God's apparent blessing on the Sabbath-breaking, pork-eating Pentecostal Christians with whom he fellowships. That caused him to ask a question, which went something like this:

"Is it possible that the changes which took place in the Church were actually somehow a part of God's plan, even though those changes were made by corrupt church leaders? Is it possible that God *intended* for the Church to shed things like the Biblical calendar and dietary laws, perhaps to make it easier for Gentiles to accept the gospel?"

That's a fair question, I thought. I'm an open-minded person, so I considered his question. I asked myself: Does the Bible absolutely rule out such a possibility?

I considered the story of Joseph in Egypt. Like Yeshua of Nazareth, Joseph was betrayed by his Hebrew brethren and went into the Gentile world. Joseph, like Yeshua, was exalted and honored in the Gentile world, where he was stripped of his Hebrew identity, at least outwardly. He wore Egyptian garments, spoke the language of Egypt, and was given an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneah. He

looked and spoke and smelled so much like an Egyptian that his own Hebrew brothers did not even recognize him.

Even though it was wrong for Joseph's brothers to do what they did, it was actually all a part of God's plan. We know this because after Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he said to them, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither but God..." (Gen. 45:5-8).

In light of the prophetic picture in the story of Joseph, is it possible that in a similar way it was actually God's plan that Yeshua be absorbed into the Gentile world, stripped of His Hebrew identity by the Church's shedding of Torah, and made to look like a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Republican named the Rev. Dr. Jesus Christ, D.D. instead of Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth, perhaps to facilitate the salvation of the Gentile world?

Does the Bible rule out such a possibility? Is that remotely even possible? I don't know. Maybe. There is a time for wheat and a time for tares. There was a time for Joseph to be disguised in Egypt, and this was a part of God's plan, so perhaps... However. *How- ever...* Even if it was God's plan for the Messianic faith to develop into something that looks more Gentile than Jewish (and this next

statement is important!), it is *also* God's plan that a time must come for the Church to *return* to its Hebrew identity, because a time came for Joseph's Hebrew identity to be revealed. There came a time for Joseph's Egyptian disguise to be removed, and there must likewise come a time in history for the Church to strip off the Gentile disguise, a time to shed the pagan customs and holidays, and return to Biblical customs and holy days. That time of restoration is now. Why do you suppose the Messianic Movement is growing by leaps and bounds? Because the time for tares is coming to an end. Now is the time to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The faith was delivered to the saints, but hijacked by the heathens. Now the saints need to reclaim and recover the faith.

The Messianic Movement is far more than just a bunch of Gentiles who are "Jewish wanna-be's." It is not just about Gentile Christians adopting Jewish ethnic customs. If that is all the Messianic Movement is to you, the novelty will soon fade. You will soon get tired of "playing Jew." I have seen lots of people come into the Messianic Movement with this attitude, and they don't stick with the lifestyle very long. They return to Gentile Christianity, or they grow lukewarm and backslide into a sinful lifestyle. They are like children who say, "I'm tired of playing cops and robbers. Let's play cowboys and Indians instead."

(Sorry. I mean cowboys and Native Americans.)

If you do not see what the Messianic Movement is really all about, you will be like Orpah, who returned to her Gentile ways after she realized that following Naomi meant abandoning her Gentile lifestyle with all its heart-warming customs and sentimental traditions, and moving to the land of Judah and living like the Jews. But if you have caught the Messianic vision, you will be like Ruth, who said to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Ruth is a picture of the Bride of Messiah. She went on to be joined in marriage to a wealthy Jewish kinsman-redeemer from Bethlehem, and became an ancestress of the Messiah Yeshua.

The kingdom of heaven is undergoing a change. This is a time of transition, because the time for tares is coming to an end. It is almost time for the final harvest, when the tares will be separated from the wheat. The antinomians will be gathered into bundles to be burnt, and the wheat will be gathered into the barn. The reapers are the angels, Yeshua said.

When the Bible speaks of angels, that word literally means "messengers." Hebrew *malach* and Greek *angelos* can refer to either a heavenly messenger or a human messenger. The reapers who gather the tares into bundles to be burnt at the end of the age will be angels who are heavenly messengers, heavenly beings. But

in preparation for those heavenly messengers who will come at the end of the age, the Lord is even now sending forth His human messengers, His human *malachim/angeloi*, to prepare the way for the heavenly messengers, His heavenly *malachim/angeloi*. I that write unto thee am one of them. I am by no means the only one nor the best one. There are many others proclaiming this message, and many of them are proclaiming it better than I can. I'm no one special, I'm just an ordinary guy with an extraordinary message. Now hear ye the conclusion of my message concerning the wheat and the tares:

Make sure you are not a tare. Make sure you are not an antinomian, a person who thinks that "under the gospel dispensation, the law is of no use or obligation" (Webster's). Consider your attitude toward God's law. If you think you might be an antinomian tare, ask the Lord to transform you into wheat, a "pro-nomian," a lover of God's law. Yeshua transformed water into wine. Surely He can also transform a tare into wheat.

"The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity (*anomias*, "lawlessness"); and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 13:41-43). □