

STUDY XVI

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION OR AT-ONE-MENT

This Ministry Committed to the Royal Priesthood--Anointed to Preach of the At-one-ment--Why the Joyful News is not Appreciated--The Results of this Ministry--Persecution and Glory--How it Tests Fidelity--Only the Faithful may Share the Atonement Work Future.

"No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest." *Heb. 5:4,5*

THE MINISTRY of reconciliation or at-one-ment is participated in by the entire "Royal Priesthood" of which our Lord Jesus is the Chief Priest or High Priest. All the Priests share in the "better sacrifices" which have progressed throughout this Gospel age, and which will be finished with its close (*Rom. 12:1*): and all who thus share the sufferings of Christ shall likewise share his future glory as participators with him in the great and glorious ministry of reconciliation of the Millennial Kingdom.

As for these under-priests, they "were by nature children of wrath, even as others," and needed first to be reconciled or at-oned to God before they could be called of God to this priesthood--"for no man taketh this honor to himself, but [only] he that is called of God." It is not until after we have received the at-one-ment, at the hands of our Redeemer, the High Priest, that we are privileged to be reckoned as joint sacrificers, joint mediators, joint reconcilers, joint at-one-ers.

Whoever received the "spirit of adoption" which constitutes him a son of God and a priest, is forthwith impelled

by that spirit to begin the ministry of reconciliation or at-one-ment, each according to his several abilities and opportunities. Each realizes, as the High Priest did, the leadings

of that holy Spirit, saying, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the glad tidings to the meek [not now to the proud and arrogant and hardhearted and profane], to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"--the period during which God is pleased to accept a little flock as living sacrifices, through the merit of the Redeemer.

The Apostle Paul as one of the under-priests felt the influence of this Spirit prompting him to engage in the work of telling all with whom he came in contact who had "ears to hear," of the "ransom for all," accomplished through our dear Redeemer's sacrifice; and to exhort all to be reconciled, at-oned, to God, and begin at once to walk in the paths of righteousness.

Note the Apostle's statement of these matters in **2 Cor. 5:17-20**.

"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away [old sins, ambitions, hopes, etc.]; behold all things are become new. And all [these new] things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry [service] of reconciliation [*katallage*--the same word rendered "atonement" in **Rom. 5:11**]; to wit [namely], that God was in Christ reconciling [at-one-ing] the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them [because their penalty was borne by Christ]. And [God] hath committed unto us [the royal priesthood] the word [message, good tidings] of reconciliation [at-one-ment]."

"Now then [because God has called us and given us as a priesthood this ministry or service in his name, and this message of favor, to declare], we are ambassadors for Christ [our official head or High Priest, and the Father's representative] as though God were inviting by us, we in Christ's stead pray you--be ye reconciled [at-oned] to God."

E489

This joyful message, which, rightly appreciated, should bring ready responses in every place and from every class, is generally rejected; and the Prophet speaking for the Royal Priesthood cries, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the Arm of Jehovah [Christ, the power of God unto salvation] revealed?" (**Isa. 53:1; John 12:38**) It is efficacious now toward the comparatively few only--even as many as the Lord our God calls to be of the Royal Priesthood; for no man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God.

The reason for the general rejection of the message is evident: reconciliation, at-one-ment with God, means opposition to sin: peace with God means a warfare against all the entrenched weakness and depraved desires of our fallen human nature: it means a complete *change* or *conversion* from the service of sin to the service of righteousness. Many who despise sin (in its grosser, viler forms at least) and who long for a reconciliation to God and an interest in the blessings which he bestows only on "the sons of God," make a start for righteousness by self-reform, only to find their own weaknesses too great for them to conquer, and that besides the whole world is arrayed on the side of sin. The only ones who can possibly get free from this slavery, wherein all were born, are those who, seeking deliverance, give heed to the Master's testimony: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me"--the one Mediator--"the Way, the Truth and the Life." Moreover, the Apostle informs us that the great Adversary, "the god of this world, hath blinded the minds" of the vast majority with falsehoods, so that they cannot appreciate the advantage contained in the offer of *at-one-ment* through the Redeemer.

Under these circumstances, the result of sin abounding, is it any wonder that to be true, faithful ambassadors for God, and in Christ's name and stead (as members of his body), means that the under-priests must follow in the footsteps of the High Priest--must suffer with him for *righteousness'* sake? The great High Priest who proclaimed "the Word of reconciliation"
E490

most clearly, was despised and rejected and crucified by those who professed to love and follow righteousness. The apostles were similarly evil treated because of their faithfulness--their refusal to compromise the message, "the word of reconciliation."

"Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake," "they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." Marvel not if the world hate you: ye know that it hated me before it hated you. These words by the great teacher were to be true "even unto the end of this age": and they are as true today as ever. Whoever will faithfully *exercise* his ambassadorship, and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, will speedily know something of the sufferings of Christ and can say truly--"The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." **Matt. 5:10-12; 10:22; Psa. 69:9; Rom. 15:3**

And here again we behold the wonderful wisdom of the divine plan; for it is while performing his priestly ministry

of "the word of reconciliation" to which the spirit of anointing impels, that each priest finds the necessity for offering up himself, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, and his reasonable service. **Rom. 12:1**

Hence the measure of self-sacrifice and sufferings for Christ, endured by each of the consecrated, becomes a *measure* (from God's standpoint--for man cannot always discern it) of the faithfulness of each as ambassadors. Every priest who fails to suffer for Christ's sake, for the Truth's sake, must therefore have been an unfaithful ambassador and minister of the New Covenant. And only to those now faithful as good soldiers of the cross will be granted the inestimable privilege of being participators with the great High Priest in the glorious at-one-ment work under the favorable conditions of the Millennial age. If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also [then] deny us. **Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12,13; Titus 1:16**

Take heed that no man take thy crown. **Rev. 3:11**

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." **Rev. 2:10**