



PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

Hiding or Abiding?

by Jim Buller

Hiding from God is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. We first find this happening right after Adam and Eve sinned, when they hid in the bushes as God came to see them in the cool of the evening. (See Genesis 3:8.) The same thing happens at the very end, when the people cry out to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” Revelation 6:16. And so, throughout the history of sin, people have been trying to avoid contact with God.

As a result, Satan and human nature have come up with unnumbered schemes that in one way or another attempt to hide from God, or at least keep Him at a distance. Some of these schemes, like atheism and the theory of evolution, are fairly straightforward with their avoidance of God. Other schemes are quite deceptive, and even pass as methods of supposedly connecting with Him. Notice the following quotation from *The Great Controversy*, page 572.

“Many are so wise in their own conceit that they feel no need of humbly seeking God that they may be led into the truth. Although priding themselves on their enlightenment, they are ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. They must have some means of quieting their consciences, and they seek that which is least spiritual and humiliating. What they desire is a method of forgetting God which shall pass as a method of remembering Him.”

Two classic examples of this are “Legalism” and “cheap grace.” Although they appear to be opposites, they are both attempts to attain salvation without really connecting with God. Legalism tries to earn salvation apart from God; whereas cheap grace holds that since there is nothing we can do to earn salvation, it doesn’t really matter whether we live apart from God or not. Both of these theological systems allow people to continue to “hide” from God, yet they pass as methods of “remembering Him.”

In several of Jesus' parable teachings, the people are surprised when they are rejected and cast out of the kingdom with the statement, "I do not know you." This should be a major warning to us. Notice in particular the following two examples.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Matthew 7:21-23.

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'" Matthew 25:1-13.

Also pay particular attention to the following comment on this last parable from *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411.

"The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form. 'They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.' Ezekiel 33:31. The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ's second coming. He says, 'In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of

their own selves; ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' 2 Timothy 3:1-5."

Did you catch that? The foolish virgins, *are* "virgins" —just like the wise. They claim to be Christians. They, "have a regard for the truth," they *have* lamps which *are* lit, and they *are* going out to meet the Bridegroom. So, where did they go wrong?

Notice what else was said about them. "The class represented by the foolish virgins have been *content with a superficial work.*" They thought all they needed was a *shallow Christianity.* They never went deep with God. The quotation goes on to say that as a result, "*They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him.*" In spite of apparently being religious people, they allowed themselves to be deceived with some scheme that keeps them from actually *connecting* with God, and getting to know and trust Him. Therefore, "their service to God degenerates into a form" —they were actually just going through the motions.

Then comes the scary part, "the apostle Paul points out that *this* will be the *special characteristic* of those who live just before Christ's second coming." This is what we can *expect* to see all around us! —and if we are honest, this *is exactly* what we *do* see all around us! In itself, this tends to deceive us; as it makes it easy for us to think shallow Christianity is normal, that this what Christianity is really all about. So, it's not just the obvious ways of hiding from God that we need to avoid. We need to watch out for these subtle deceptions which are possibly even more dangerous.

Another one of these subtle deceptions, which was alluded to above, is not studying for ourselves. Even though we may be listening to godly preachers, or reading godly authors, we still need *our own personal connection* with God. Keep in mind what is said in *Christ's Object Lessons* page 365, "Many who profess to be Christians neglect the claims of God, and yet they do not feel that in this there is any wrong. They ... enjoy the services of religion. They love to hear the gospel preached, and therefore they think themselves Christians." Just enjoying religion and its services is not enough. Remember the foolish virgins had lamps that were lit, and they *were* going out to meet the Bridegroom.

Another one of these schemes is being so busy "working *for* God" that we don't take time to connect *with* Him. Possibly we once were connected to God —that's why we are so busy working for Him— but then we get too busy to keep up the connection. Keep in mind that our human nature *wants* to hide from God, and that it is something we will likely have to struggle with until we are changed when Jesus comes.

Still another way we hide from God is by shutting ourselves away from nature. *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 2*, page 584, brings this out where it says, "Those who sacrifice simplicity to fashion, and shut themselves away from the beauties of nature, cannot be spiritually minded." In our modern culture it definitely is not *fashionable* to connect with nature. But please notice that it did *not* say that we would just have a hard time being spiritual if we stayed away from nature, it said we "*cannot* be spiritually minded" —in other words *it is impossible!* No wonder there is such a lack of spirituality in the world nowadays. Unfortunately, nature isn't even a part of most people's reality anymore.

However, for another group, nature is a big playground. They *do* go out into nature, which is probably better than staying in town, but they go essentially seeking another ride at the amusement park. If the “nature activity” doesn’t have enough “pucker factor,” or give them a “rush,” they’re really not interested in it. In all the excitement, it’s easy to avoid God without even thinking about it. Probably sub-consciously they realize that slowing down, and connecting with nature would also mean connecting with nature’s Creator—and this would mean facing His claims on them. Please don’t misunderstand me here, it is not wrong to enjoy nature. God created an exciting world for us to live in. *But we must not stop there.* If we do, we are no better than the idol worshipers—who worship created things rather than the Creator Himself. We need to be really honest with ourselves, and ask: Where is our focus? What are we “seeking first?”

All of this goes along with the Laodecian attitude described in Revelation 3:14-22. Because we enjoy being involved with religion and getting into nature we think we are OK, and that being just-warm-enough-that-it-can’t-be-said-that-we’re-cold is good enough. However, Jesus calls this being “lukewarm,” and says it is nauseating to Him. This attitude of not-needing-anything—which translates into not needing to connect with God—is really just another attempt to forget God which passes as “a method of remembering Him.”

Hiding from God is also a deciding factor in the judgement, as alluded to in the parables mentioned earlier. Notice the judgement language of the verses which immediately follow John 3:16.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:16-21.

The reason people are condemned in the judgement is because, “light *has* come into the world.” God *has* revealed Himself. However, “men loved darkness rather than light.” Therefore they do “not come to the light,” but hide back in the shadows because they want to do things they know God does not necessarily approve of. But, in the last verse of this passage, we find that there *are* those who *do* come to “the light,” as it is “clearly seen” that what they do, has “been done *in* God.”

Brothers and sisters, God doesn’t want us to hide from Him. When Adam and Eve were back in the bushes, *He* came down looking for them! And His, “light *has* come into the world,” searching for *us*! God wants to connect with us. Jesus says, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in

the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John 15:4-5. He *knows* we cannot make it on our own, so He wants us to *abide in Him*. The indwelling Holy Spirit then works in us, resulting in the things we do being "done in God."

This brings us to the simple question, Are we "hiding" or are we "abiding?" So, let's not hide from God. Let's let Him find us, and bring us to Himself; and may our goal be to continually abide in Him.

Steps to Christ, page 69

You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Christ's Object Lessons, page 159

No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.

Christ's Object Lessons, page 332

Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His own life to cancel your sins. He says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer.

Education, page 91

Jesus reproved His disciples, He warned and cautioned them; but John and Peter and their brethren did not leave Him. Notwithstanding the reproofs, they chose to be with Jesus. And the Saviour did not, because of their errors, withdraw from them. He takes men as they are, with all their faults and weaknesses, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and taught by Him.