

# THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

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Dear Reader

We are given instructions in the book of Hebrews to go forth to Christ “outside the camp.” The words are few, but we believe they have great implications regarding our collective walk today as part of God’s Church. So to help us in understanding this expression, we bring together two well known writers — brother Leslie M. Grant of Seattle Washington, no stranger to the readers of the *Assembly Messenger*, and brother R.K.Campbell who is now with the Lord, but was a good friend and faithful minister of the Word, and prolific writer. Brother Leslie writes the main part while the summary is adapted from brother Campbell’s book, *The Church of the Living God*, often referenced in these pages. Let’s see first what brother Leslie has for us.

## GO FORTH TO HIM OUTSIDE THE CAMP

This expression is found in Hebrews 13:12-13, in an epistle that is primarily applicable to Jewish Christians, but is just as necessary for every Christian on earth. We are told, “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. *Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*” Can any Christian think of ignoring such serious words? Are we not deeply concerned to understand their full significance?

A similar expression in the Old Testament will be of real help to us in this matter. When Moses had received the tablets of stone inscribed with the ten commandments, he returned to the camp of Israel to find the Israelites worshipping a golden calf and dancing (Ex.32:15-19). He threw down the tablets of stone and broke them, and he ground the calf to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. He

called out, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side, come to me!” The Levites came, and he ordered them to kill the people indiscriminately, and about 3000 were killed (Ex.32:20-28).

But even this judgment could not satisfy God’s righteousness. He told Moses to depart and lead the people to Canaan, with the help of an angel, but added, “I will not go up in your midst, for you are a stiff-necked people” (Ex.33:1-3). They had not merely been guilty of failure, but had chosen a standard of idolatry that was a challenge to God’s authority.

Could Moses think of leading over two million people without God’s presence? No, he could not. But the camp had been corrupted: what could he do? “Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp” (Ex.33:7). Thus, Moses was saying in effect, “If God cannot go with us, then we must go with Him, even though it means separating from the camp.” It was only after this that he obtained the promise of God to go with them (vv.15-17).

Is God any less jealous for His glory now than He was then? Certainly not! Just as the camp of Israel had been established by God at first, so Christianity was established by God in beautiful simplicity and purity. Has idolatry invaded Christianity? Sad to say, it is true, for anything that takes the place of God in whatever measure, is idolatry. For instance, the doctrine of the clergy was very soon adopted in the history of the Church, so that a mere *man* became the head of a “church” or the head of a group of “churches.” Scripture allows only one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and only one Church, the body of Christ.

Again, not being satisfied with the simplicity that is in Christ, many professing Christians have urged the introduction of rituals that are intended to be impressive, and which take the place of heart-affection for the Lord Jesus. These things, and beautiful instrumental music are considered indispensable to a “church service,” but they all lead to lesser appreciation of the Lord Jesus. If people want these things, it is because they are not satisfied with Christ, and in the measure they favor these, in that measure Christ is displaced, for such things become idols.

But though Israel today does not literally worship a golden calf, the nation is just as guilty of idolatry as they were in Exodus. Why? Because the true God came to Israel, to the Jewish fold, the camp, in the person of the Lord Jesus, to “lead them out” to the blessings of Christianity (Jn.10:3), but they instead led Him *outside* the gate of its capitol city, Jerusalem, and crucified Him. Thus, we are told, “He, bearing His cross, went *out* to a place called the Place of a Skull” (Jn.19:17) and “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered *outside* the gate” (Heb.13:12). When Israel has rejected the true God, who then are they worshipping? They are virtually worshipping themselves and their own imagined righteousness, just as the Pharisee who “prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men” (Lk.18:11). Certainly Israel’s camp then is corrupted by idolatry.

But not only is Israel’s camp set aside because of idolatry. God established it at the beginning, not for Gentiles, but for Israel alone. *Now He has introduced the dispensation of the grace of God, in which Jewish and Gentile believers are brought together in one body.* This itself is a great contrast to “the camp,” for the Church is given *heavenly* blessings in contrast to Israel’s *earthly* blessings: it has no appointed human leader such as Moses, no high priest such as Aaron (Christ Himself being the only High Priest); no select priesthood as were the sons of Aaron, for all believers are seen as priests (1

Pet.2:5,9); no elaborate ritual such as offering animal sacrifices.

Yet there are many today who urge that the Church should borrow at least some of these things from Israel, and this has been done to a greater or lesser extent in almost every professedly-Christian group. Thus *Christendom* [professing Christianity] has become “a camp” similar to Israel. Actually, when adopting Israel's principles, we shall be quickly led into idolatry .... or could we not consider that just seeking those things is idolatry?

Can we find the *Lord* in those circumstances? No! He suffered *outside the gate*, and if we desire His presence, we must go forth to Him outside the camp. Of course we shall find His reproach there, for many refuse such separation. But if we have His own approving presence, what else matters?

LMG

### **SUMMARY: OUTSIDE THE CAMP OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTENDOM**

The following chart summarizes the above by comparing Old Testament *Judaism*; the God-intended Christian position as seen in the scriptural functioning of the true Church; and the position and practice of the professed Christianity of our dispensation, which religious men have developed to a greater or lesser extent to suit themselves and to provide something for the *flesh* (our fallen, natural nature) to enjoy. We are saddened wherever Christians are caught up in a false position, *to any degree*, because it is displeasing to our Lord and it relegates these dear believers to a lower position than Christ ever intended for them.

Let’s now look at the summary gleaned from brother Campbell’s writings. Where do you find yourself and your “church”-position in the following chart? Seriously ask yourself whether your position has the Lord’s approval. If not,

what are you going to do about it? Will “nothing” be an acceptable answer when you stand before Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

We in no way claim that the following seven points fit all of today’s religious organizations. But what would the Lord say if only one or two points fit?

### **The Camp of Judaism**

Those who would seek the Lord and enjoy His presence must go forth unto *Him* in the place of His rejection where the religious world of today puts Him — outside its camp. The camp of Judaism is described in Hebrews 9:1-10.

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1. The Jewish camp was marked by an *earthly sanctuary* with majestic furniture. Although gathered around the Tabernacle, the people were kept away from God.

2. There was an inner part, the “Holiest of all,” veiled off from the rest of the sanctuary. The *priests* could daily enter the first part, but only the high priest could enter the Holiest of All, once a year (vv.3-7). God was shut in and man shut out.

3. There was no free access to God under this system of worship, “signifying that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest” (v.8).

4. There was an ordained

### **The Contrast of the Church**

On the foundation of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, God formed the *Church* on the day of Pentecost, an *organism* with a heavenly future. The Church has the opposite features of the camp of Judaism. Its characteristics follow:

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1. The Christian’s sanctuary is in heaven. Christ appears in the presence of God for us as Minister of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb.8:2; 9:24-28).

2. The veil into the Holiest of All is rent, giving every believer free access to the Holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb.10:19-25). God came out to man in Christ, and Christ has gone in to God for the believer.

3. There is now full access to God. “Through Him we both (Jew and Gentile Christians) have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph.2:18).

### **The Camp of Christendom**

The *professing* church (Christendom) has lost its heavenly character and the features of proper Christian position. It is now an *amalgamation* of worldliness, Judaism and true Christianity. Following are some of its features.

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1. An earthly sanctuary with majestic appearance, with elaborate furniture and vessels, all pleasing to the flesh of religious people.

2. There is often a fenced-off inner shrine into which only officiating priests or ministers go. The “layman” is permitted to only come to the railing. This “shrine” is often elevated, showing the *elevated* position of the officiating clergyman.

3. There is no free access to God, at least for the layperson. God is rarely addressed as *Lord, Savior, Father* — terms that show God’s nearness to the child of God.

4. There is a humanly-

priesthood, an order of priests distinct from the rest of the people, who devoted themselves to the service of the sanctuary and officiated between the people and God. The people had no direct part in the service of the sanctuary (v.6).

5. This worldly sanctuary with its priests and sacrifices could not give the worshipers a purged conscience or make the offerers perfect before God (Heb.9:9; 10:1-3).

6. It was a system of worship, ordained of God *for Israel in the flesh*. It did not suppose or require that worshipers be believers. Israel was a mixed company of believers and unbelievers on the ground of law keeping (Heb.3-4).

7. It was an earthly religion, established on the earth and suited to man in the flesh, with no thought of any reproach connected with it.

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God sent His Son, the promised Messiah, into the camp of Judaism, but He was rejected and slain outside the gates of its metropolis — Jerusalem. The cross of Christ put an end to Judaism with its types and shadows, and brought in *grace* and an accomplished redemption in Christ.

4. *Every* believer in Christ is a royal priest, privileged to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. No special class of priests, distinct from the common Christian people in New Testament Christianity, is needed or authorized to lead in worship or prayer (1 Pet.2:5-9).

5. Through the one perfect and complete offering of Christ, believers have a purged conscience and are assured their sins are remembered no more (Heb.9:14; 10:10, 14-17).

6. The true Church does not include any who have a mere outward relationship to God. Only those who are really born again are a part of the true Church and able to “worship Him in spirit and in truth” (Jn.3:3; 4:23-24).

7. Christianity is distinctively heavenly (Phil.3:20-21). It is not suited to man in the flesh, but is an offense to him. Thus the *reproach of the cross* is connected with true Christian worship.

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Therefore, true Christianity is not a religious camp on earth, but a called-out company of believers, united to Christ, their glorified Head in heaven, as a body to a Head (Col.1:18). “Unto Him” believers are to go forth, outside the camp of earthly religion (Heb.13:10-15).

ordained, special class of priests or “ministers” who stand between God and the people, making a clergy and a laity. The leadership of the Holy Spirit to use whomsoever He wills (1 Cor.12:7-11) is thus set aside.

5. A purged conscience — the knowledge of sins forgiven and acceptance before God — is generally not known. To say that one is saved and sure of heaven is termed presumption by many.

6. Christians and unbelievers come together as public worshipers on the ground of good works and law keeping for salvation. There is often no requirement for being “born again” to join their denomination and/or partake of the Lord’s Supper.

7. These systems are more or less organized to appeal to, and to embrace man in the flesh. Hence, no offense to the natural man is often a goal, or is there much reproach of Christ and His cross to bear in being a part of their organization.

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Someone has well-defined this camp of Christendom as “anything where Christ is *in name*, but not in reality.” Wherever a human organization displaces Christ, and wherever Christ is not *directly* recognized as in absolute control through His Word and the Holy Spirit, you

Adapted from RKC

have the camp of Christendom,  
even if not all its elements are  
present.