

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD – BY ERIC D. SMITH

CHAPTER 7 - THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

– 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12

While the meanings of the words *sin* and *iniquity* are almost the same, the Greek uses different words for each. The Greek word for *sin* means to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, or to violate God's law. The Greek word for *iniquity* means the condition of being without law, because of ignorance of it or because of violating it. Iniquity is more of a condition or character of lawlessness or wickedness within the heart. Sin can refer to one single violation of God's Word, but iniquity will usually point to a lawless or defiant character.

There is a virus of the soul that Satan infects humans with. Paul brings out one of the main symptoms of this infected soul in verse ten: *“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Sin can come into one's life when one begins doubting the Word of God, such as what happened with Adam and Eve. A lawless heart comes when one does not have a love for the truth. Truth is decided by the Word of God. Paul said that those that do not have a love for the truth will believe a lie.

If you do not have the love for the truth, then the infection of iniquity will set in. The Old Testament prophet Jonah spoke these words as he ran from his stewardship and eventually found himself in the belly of the great fish, *“They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy”* (Jonah 2:8).

Questions, Discussions and Notes

1. Which English word describes more of a lawless character of the heart?
2. Would you consider Satan to have a heart of sin or a heart of iniquity?
3. What happens to someone that does not have a “love of the truth”?
4. Who (or what) decides what is really truth?
5. The word *observe* in Jonah 2:8 means to guard as if building a hedge around or to be a keeper or protector of something. What happens to one's mercy when that person tries to guard lying vanities?

The fall of Satan can be found in Isaiah chapter fourteen. *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”* (Isaiah 14:12-15)

While God’s love for us keeps God reaching for lost humanity, Satan’s desire stems from an intense hatred for anything that God loves. John 10:10 clarifies, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*

The Word of God has always been a target of Satan’s attack to destroy man’s relationship with God. If we ever begin to doubt God’s Word, or if we are ignorant of God’s Word, then it is easy for Satan to lead us into the “sin” part of violating God’s Word. Therefore, it is imperative we learn the mysteries that have been given to us as stewards. It is the Church’s responsibility as stewards to reach a lost and dying world. It is the Church’s responsibility to preach the TRUTH, and not preach deluded, watered down doctrines that spill over into error. We must love the truth enough to make changes in our lives so we can follow the Word and then share the Word with others.

By using the term “mystery of iniquity”, Paul is referring to a force that has been working without the knowledge of others that is bringing about disobedience or doubt to the truth of God’s Word. It began with the fall of Satan but has been active throughout the history of mankind. It is still active today, even within the Church. This lawlessness is not referring to lawlessness to man’s laws, but a lawlessness to God’s Word. There are churches, congregations, and individual Christians who no longer want to acknowledge truth or follow God’s Word. Paul warns of this happening inside the Church in 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

6. What can we determine about Satan’s (Lucifer) desire which is found in Isaiah chapter 14?
7. Could Satan ever be considered a friend to anyone, even if Satan offered them the riches of this world? Explain your answer.
8. Why must the Church preach the TRUTH, and not preach deluded, watered down doctrines that spill over into error? Explain.
9. Did the writers of the New Testament think that there would be false teachings that would try to invade the doctrines of the Church?
10. What do you think would be the best way to prevent false doctrine from entering into the Church?