

Proliferation of Replicas

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Isaiah 4:1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

If we prayerfully study the first part of the book of Isaiah, we will probably come to the conclusion that the Lord began by rebuking Judah and Israel in Chapter One, then at the point near the end of Chapter 1 and the beginning of Chapter 2 began to prophecy through Isaiah about things to come. I believe Chapter Three and Four are just a continuation of those prophecies, but we sometimes lose that continuity because of the chapter divisions.

I mention this fact, because there is a lot of commentary about what the prophecies of Isaiah mean, and our text verse is among those verses that have been variously explained. But, regardless of what we may understand these prophecies to mean, if we follow Isaiah's writings through Chapter Two and into Chapter Three, it becomes apparent that he is writing about things that will be happening near the end of time, while at the same time probably writing about an imminent event which is to befall Israel and Judah. John Gill (18th century Baptist preacher in England) has written that the last few verses of Chapter Three are a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and overthrow of Israel by Titus in 70 A.D. If he is correct, then our text verse follows; and it fits with what I believe the Lord is prophesying as an allegory. Our text speaks of 7 women of unknown identity. Just previous to this in the last verses of Chapter 3, the Lord speaks of Jerusalem as a woman and prophecies of here fall and desolation. We find the Lord uses references to women in several places in the bible as being symbolic of spiritual conditions or events. In Isaiah 54, a woman who has been barren, but is suddenly having children is used to symbolize (what many bible scholars believe to be) a barren church suddenly producing converts; a comely and delicate woman as the nation of Israel in Jeremiah 6; Jerusalem as a menstrous woman in Lamentations 1:17; Jerusalem as an imperious and whorish woman in Ezekiel 16; two whorish women are symbols used by the Lord in Ezekial 23 for Samaria and Jerusalem; a woman is the symbol of personified wickedness in Zec. 5:7; the Lord's church is symbolized by a woman in Song of Solomon 6:10 and Rev. 12. Then apostate religion as an entity is symbolized by a woman who is a harlot in Rev. 17:11-5. So, we do not violate the manner and method of God in symbolism and allegory when we suspect a prophecy in the form of an allegory in this, our text.

However, whether prophecy or not, this verse is a very concise, complete biblical description that I believe accurately describes the process of the proliferation of so-called Christian religions, churches, and religious organizations that has taken place over time. For that reason, I want us to consider this verse with that thought in mind and note:

I have entitled this message "Proliferation of Replicas" because I could not think of better words to describe what we see in the expansion of all the variants on the Christian religion and all the variants on the Lord's church in this age.

Proliferate: 1 : to grow by rapid production of new parts, cells, buds, or offspring

2 : to increase in number as if by proliferating

In the 20th century it was often used to describe the alarming multiplication of nuclear weapons: nuclear proliferation

Replica: a close reproduction of the original

Comment here about the parallel similarity between the sudden looming threat of socialism/fascism as a way of life in our nation and the sudden looming presence of a gargantuan apostate Christianity.

I. The Fact of Replication of Churches So-Called and Other Religious Organizations

▪ "...seven women shall take hold of one man...." **A fulness of religious adherents, denominations, and churches will attach themselves to the name of Christ and attach the name of Christ to themselves**

- > A 2005 statistic posted on adherents.com stated that there were 2.1 billion people professing some kind of Christian religion. This was at a time when the world population was estimated at about 6.5 billion people. This means that in 2005, about one-third or 33% of the world professed to follow Christ.
- > Among these 6.5 billion who lay a claim to Christ, there are at least 33,830 denominations, according to David Barrett in his 1,699 page exhaustive 2001 work called the World Christian Encyclopedia, published by Oxford University Press. Dr. Barrett has studied world religions for more than 40 years.
- Based on biblical evidence concerning what constitutes the true teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine defended by the early church and its elders, we have a template by which we can discern replicas from the authentic. We won't have time to deal in depth with the earmarks of one of the Lord's true churches, but among this group of faithful witnesses there is no doubt overwhelming knowledge concerning those identifying characters. What I want to do then, is to contrast authentic and replicas so that we may be able to apply the truths of those contrasts to identify the difference between the two.

II. The Profile and Agendas of the Replicas Contrasted With The Genuine

- Contrasts between the original and replicas. Let's review some rules about originals or authentic products and replicas:
 - > **the genuine is an original product of its true creator** (Matthew 16:18)
 - > **replicas are produced by entrepreneurs seeking profit** (in 2 Peter Ch.2, the apostle Peter was warning believers about false prophets that would arise in the last days to lead people away from the true path of Christ and he said in 2Peter 2:3 "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you....")
 - We probably usually think of this warning in terms of some religious professional fleecing willing followers. But, looking closely at the wording of this statement we can realize that the apostle Peter was actually telling the people of God that they were

themselves to become merchandise. So, we can take this verse to be a warning that there will be religious professionals who trade in religious followers like speculators buy and sell stocks and bonds; like grocery managers put their stock on shelves as displays to make them visible to the public as the quality merchandise that they have accumulated, and as a marketable item. While this certainly suggests display for profit, the very display of followers is a kind of merchandising. Do you see any similarities with this mental image and what we see going on in religious circles today?

- > **the genuine is an authentic display of the ingenuity and creativity of its maker** (Paul writes in Eph. 3:9-10 about the purpose of his preaching and about the Lord's design and intent and the role of the church in that design and intent; in these verses we see how the church is the authentic evidence of God's ingenuity: v.9 "And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: v.10 To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,**"
- > **replicas are artificial reproductions which attempt to mimic the genuine** (the 7 women say, "...let us be called by thy name....")
 - The 7 women of our text are (what I will call) 7 pseudo-wives.
 - They propose to take on the man's name, but they have obviously kept their own independence. (This is the hallmark of religious replicas)
 - Churches and religious organizations advertising the name of Jesus Christ, but having their own set of doctrines, practices, policies, order and method of worship.
 - Jesus articulated a righteous rebuke to such as these: Luke 6:46-47 "**And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them...**" etc.
 - Having assumed to use the man's name gives them credibility and legitimacy (the replicas of the world will insist on being called Christian). "...to take away our reproach."
 - They will be fully aware of the reproach and loss of influence by not using Christ's name in a Christian culture and in a world of religious exhibitionism
 - As the Jews of Jesus' day (and still today) say, "we have Abraham to our father," so replicated religious organizations claim Christ as their Lord and Master to keep their credibility and legitimacy in a religious world.
 - Name recognition and large scale advertising is a pivotal merchandising strategy: The Bible Society of the United Kingdom calculates that the number of Bibles printed between 1816 and 1975 was 2,458,000,000. By 1992 the estimated number rose to nearly

six billion. Furthermore, worldwide sales of the Bible number more than a staggering 100 million each year, far outpacing any other book in history.

- remember that 33% of the world population claims to be associated with Christianity.
- There is another and more sinister reason why the religious replicas will be greatly interested in being called by Jesus' name: 2Cor. 11:13-15 "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ**. 14 And no marvel; for **Satan himself is transformed** into an angel of light. 15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be **transformed as the ministers of righteousness....**" Be very conscious of where the sinister power to be transformed comes from.
- An honest question: if, as we claim, the Lord only has one true ecclesia (assembly, church), and it manifests it as a local visible body of baptized believers with authority from Christ for its existence, and exists as a spiritual organism by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, what are these other organizations, and where are they getting their power and authority?

> **When dealing in replicas, the mimicry or copying of the authentic is what attracts customers to buy the replicated product**

- 2Pet. 2:1-2 "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 "And **many shall follow their pernicious ways**; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."
- Mat. 24:11 "**And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.**"
- 2Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; **but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers**, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be **turned unto fables**.
 - Without grace in the heart and guidance by the Spirit, basic human passion will drive a person's religious preferences
 - Carnal humans, turned religious, know how to find teachers that will patronize them and speak things that have the tone of religion without the offensiveness that the purity of God's truth provokes in the unregenerate religious person
 - Replicated doctrine and replicated Christian philosophy which is a close approximation to the authentic is nothing more than fable, and it appeals to the lustful religious nature of the Adamic man
- **(Now, let's back up in our text verse) "...eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel..." Those denominations and religious organizations will define their own teaching and doctrine to draw disciples, promote their agenda, and mimic the teachings of the Lord's**

true churches

- > Christ's doctrine is not needed because it is not suitable for the kind of maintenance and growth they are seeking
- > They have their own clothing, their own food; and it closely mimics the very clothing and food of Him whose name they have hijacked
 - Many are clothed in a wardrobe of self-righteousness they have woven by elevating their definition of human holiness to a level that bestows salvation
 - Clothed in a diversity of flowing robes of respectable religion, they remind us of Jesus' description of the moral condition of the Pharisees of His day. Mat. 23:27-28 **“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”**
 - Let us remind ourselves that this comment by Jesus was about a group of hyper-religious people
 - Christ's lordship and oversight is not wanted because for them to take it would mean dependence on its provider
 - The Lord's observation about His church: Song of Solomon 8:5 *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?*
 - The Lord's observation about apostate religion: Mat. 15:8 **“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.”**
 - The true persona of Christ will be compromised, because the Christ of the Bible conflicts with the designs and goals of the master of replicas.
 - Bro. Dan preached a healing Christ of omnipotent capabilities
 - Bro. Randy preached a longsuffering and forbearing Lord...God waits
 - Brother Darryl preached a Worthy Christ
 - Bro. Tom preached a Christ of Power who empowers His church to work
 - Bro. Ed preached a returning Christ to call for accountability
 - Bro. Lafferty preached a risen and revealed Christ at a time of decline
 - Bro. Jeff preached a Christ for young men and a Christ of Consecration
 - Bro. Lee preached a Christ of peace
- > Apostate Christianity has a replica message for each of these; that means they are close reproductions of the originals: Some Examples (referring back to the Brother's

sermons)

- > The healing Christ: electronic healer in a white suit slapping the forehead of the poor sick subject
- > God waits: The Lord sitting in heaven wringing His hands, waiting for the sinner who has been given the gospel to decide to follow Jesus
- > Worthy Christ: Christ shed His blood to offer a sinner the gift of salvation; do you want Christ to be disappointed in you; do you want Christ to have shed His blood in vain for you?
- > Christ of Power: Christ has died for the sins of every one in the world; he had the power to do that; now He is waiting and hoping that you will be a partaker of that power by accepting Him as your Savior

▪ **Replicas dilute the perceived value of the authentic**

- > Listen to this statement by an expert of authentic antiques: “By its sheer presence in quantity, the replica can **coarsen and corrupt public appreciation** of the prototype (or original).” (Reconstruction, Reproduction, and Replica: Use and Abuse, James Marston Fitch, 1990)
- > empirical observation by anybody will verify this in a culture of many Christian replicas

- > The Etruscan Warrior, a terra cotta replica forged by an Italian family was passed off for years as an original classic creation and was finally exposed as a fake. It was said by art experts that “while the forgery remained unexposed, it constituted a **threat to the whole system of values** carefully constructed by decades of scholarly, hard work.”
 - See Galatians 4 where false teachers promoting Jewish superstition and ceremonialism threatened the entire work that Paul had done in the Galatian church.

III. Conclusion

We live in a world of religious replicas. Everywhere denominations and organizations use the name of Christ to promote their own agenda, their own doctrine, their own causes, their own crusades, their own brand of religion. They have a body of doctrine and practice that mimics the truths of the living God and has great appeal to a world rushing headlong toward a totally social gospel. They are dupes of the master of deceit; the devil. The authentic Church of God seems overshadowed by this mass of mainstream Christianity. Have you ever contemplated the idea that this horde of apostate Christian people spread out across the earth are the bulk of the very ones that Christ spoke about when He said (Mat. 7:13) “...**broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat...**?” They despise the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and consider them to be cults. Soon the concerted prejudice of a mainstream religion will turn a hateful eye on the churches of God. We will feel the effects of their malice. More than we do now. We will be singled out. We will be in a minuscule minority. What will we do? What will be our duty and our privilege? We are the witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help us to be faithful when we get to the place where being a true Baptist will

cost us. May we have the strength of faith to pay the price.

- What is our solution? As simple as it may seem, this is it:
 - > Matthew 16:18 “**Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**”
 - > Mat. 28:20 “**...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.**”
- We must remember and trust these truths; that we are the Lord’s authentic churches, and that these promises are to us. We must hold on to this during these trying times, and act upon the authority and assurance of them.