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Fasting Article No. 4b – Instruction (REPLACES Fasting Article No. 4.)

By Prayer and Fasting (Part Four — the Secret Fast)

Introduction For this exercise you will need a globe, a magnifying glass, a sewing needle and a sanctified imagination. With your needle, make a small pinprick on Jerusalem. Suppose it's about 900 BC. With your magnifying glass study the small cavity you made with the needle and imagine you are looking at the Temple of Solomon. Peer into the Temple, and peek behind the veil. Look for a gold covered wooden box called the Ark of the Covenant. The top of the Ark is called the mercy seat. Two Cherubs, each stretching its wings toward the other, shadow the mercy seat. Concentrate on the empty space beneath the wings of the Cherubim. You are now looking at the exclusive dwelling place of the Spirit of Almighty God in 900 BC — in a small room He called the Holy Place. When the High priest presented the sacrifice before this Ark, God's glory filled the Temple. But when Israel was in disfavor with the Lord, the Holy Ghost did not fill the Temple.

Skip forward 900 years. It's the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The priests have poured out the water that rushes across the Temple floor and down into the streets of Jerusalem, commemorating the spring of waters God gave to Israel by the hand of Moses when he smote the rock in the wilderness. Standing in up to three inches of water, Jesus cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" [John 7:37-38]. Jesus was talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit, which had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified [John 7:39]. This glorification refers to His crucifixion.

The Scripture tells us that Christ is that Rock [1Corinthians 10:4]. And the waters that flowed from it represented the coming of the Holy Spirit of God into the world through Jesus Christ after His crucifixion. Jesus invited us to drink of this water. And He promised that this water (the Holy Spirit) would flow through the belly of all who believe. The Lord has claimed our body, and decreed it to be the Temple of God [1Corinthians 6:19-20]. The earthly dwelling place of the Spirit of God is no longer limited to that itty bitty spot beneath the wings of the Cherubim on the mercy seat. Instead, He dwells in the heart of all who believe on Jesus Christ [Galatians 4:6]. And Jesus expects the Holy Ghost to flow from our belly like a river of living water. Capture the vision — millions of believers, all over the world, each one the Temple of God, where God dwells in the New Testament Holy Place, and through whom the Holy Ghost will flow into the world. We saw it in the early days of the Lord's churches, the Holy Ghost flowing mightily, powerfully, fully, gloriously. But now we are amazed when we see trickles. "Mercy drops 'round us are falling, but for the showers we plead." Why?

If you are a believer, you are a priest in the New Testament Temple [1Peter 2:5], which is your body [1Corinthians 6:19-20], and your heart is His Holy Place [Galatians 4:6]. It's a royal priesthood, charged with the duty of presenting spiritual sacrifices [1Peter 2:5]. God has invested this treasure in earthen vessels [2Corinthians 4:7]. And so He commands His priests to study how to keep their vessels in sanctification and honor [1Thessalonians 4:4; compare 2Timothy 2:21]. Many of the vessels are un sanctified. Covetous, corrupt priests have defiled the Temple of God. These priests grieve the Spirit [Ephesians 4:30-31] and even quench Him [1Thessalonians 5:19]. And so the glory is departed [1Samuel 4:21], and the river does not flow.

Many New Testament priests today are like Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli [1Samuel 1-3]. They were belly servers, feeding their own lusts [1Samuel 2:9]. These wicked priests, "... lay with the women that assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation" [1Samuel 2:22]. God destroyed them. Of how much greater judgment do you suppose New Testament priests are worthy if they erect idols of covetousness in the very room where the Holy Ghost dwells, yea, if they entertain impure thoughts in the very throne room of God, yea, if they commit adultery and fornication in the Holy of Holies — for ye priests do these things in your heart [Colossians 3:5; Matthew 5:28]. The "rivers" will not flow until these wicked priests repent. And the priests will not repent

until they are humbled. And they will be humbled! God is going to move mightily in our midst and purge His House [1Timothy 3:15]. The priests who refuse to repent will be destroyed [1Corinthians 3:17]. Fellow priests, if we judge ourselves, we may avert the coming judgment of God [1Corinthians 11:31]. Mark my words! Judgment is framed in the heart of God; and when it begins, those who are of the spirit of Ted Haggard will drop dead in our churches as did Ananias and Sapphira [Acts 5]. So I call upon you to humble your soul with fasting [Psalm 35:13]. And in this article, I address the issue of secrecy.

**Secret Fasting** Fasting is for heavenly glow, not earthly show. Jesus expressly forbade us to follow the example of the hypocrites [Matthew 6:16-19]. They fasted to be seen of men. They did it for show. We are to fast for our Heavenly Father, to receive His honor, to enjoy the glow of His favor upon our lives. For that reason, Jesus instructed us to avoid putting on the long face, so as to appear unto men to be fasting.

But there is confusion over the principle of secrecy in fasting. Some have mistakenly taken Jesus' words in Matthew 6:16-19 as instructing us to tell no one when we are fasting. Of course, that is absurd on the face of it. The Apostle Paul, instructed couples to not abstain from one another in the marriage bed except with one another's consent, for the purpose of fasting [1Corinthians 7:5; see Hebrews 13:4]. Obviously, the Holy Ghost expected married couples to agree together on seasons of fasting and that involves letting someone know. We also have examples of publicly called fasts [Esther 4:16; see also Joel 1:14; 2:15]. The disciples often fasted together; and therefore, they were not fasting secretly [Acts 13:3; 14:23]. The instruction to avoid fasting in order to be seen of men does not require that you keep the fact that you are fasting a secret. The mistake is owing to a misreading of the text.

Jesus did not tell us to be secretive about our fasting. He told us that the Father is the One Who is "in secret." He is invisible to our physical eyes, and He watches us "in secret." It does not say you are to be secretive in your fasting; it says that we are fasting for Him Who is invisible [Hebrews 11:27], who watches in secret. And we are to do this anticipating a public demonstration of His favor (blessedness) upon our lives. What we are not to do is to fast for the favor of men.

It is not a violation of Jesus' words concerning fasting to inform your spouse, family, and even your friends when you are entering into a season of fasting and prayers. It might be necessary in some instances, in order to avoid unnecessarily offending someone with your otherwise inexplicable behavior (avoiding invitations to dine, physical weakness etc.) There are times when you might enter into a covenant to fast with other brothers or sisters in Christ [Acts 13:3; 14:23]. There are times when you might be called upon to participate in a church wide fast [Esther 4:16]. And there may be times when you inform only those who must know. Being sensitive to Jesus' instruction to avoid fasting in order to garner the favor of men ought to motivate us to be careful about our motivation regarding who is informed about our fast, but it does not require us to keep it a secret.

**Conclusion** All believers who fear that America is overdue for judgment [Jeremiah 9:9] need to remember that He begins with the House of God [1Peter 4:17 with 1Timothy 3:15]. He warned us that those priests who defile the Temple of God will be destroyed [1Corinthians 3:17; 1Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:5-6; with 1Corinthians 6:19-20]. Are you a faithful priest in the Temple of God? Will you present the sacrifice of intercessory prayer for America [Psalm 141:2]? Will you humble yourself, and pray, and seek His face [2Chronicles 7:14]. Will you humble your soul with fasting [Psalm 35:13]? And when you do, take care you fast seriously, sincerely, and for the glory of our Father Who watches in secret, desiring to reward you openly.

Fasting Article No. 4b — The Secret Fast

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