

Expository Apostasy

If you could describe the apostasy using the image of a physical condition taken out of the Bible, which scriptural portrayal would you use? Isaiah 1:5b-6 affords us the perfect image, "...the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." This grotesque image is that of apostasy and from its description, it is also incurable. The Spirit utilizes strong imagery to allow the reader to understand that the Lord sees the state of apostasy as a chronic disease covering the entire body, hence, the image of apostasy is widespread. The symbolism also suggests that apostasy is seen by God as obstinate rebellion against the Covenant, and therefore, making reconciliation and restoration impossible. Although the physical body is used, notwithstanding, it has an immediate application to the Jewish State and a future application to the spiritual Body of Christ, the Church. This is not a picture of a sinful condition that the blood of Jesus can atone for. It is instead a depiction of the irremediable spiritual condition of a once faithful nation or church that has abandoned the faith "once given to the saints" (Jude 3). It is also safe to conclude then, that Isaiah's vision points to a universal apostasy from which reinstatement cannot be obtained.

Since by definition apostasy implies the abandonment of *the Faith*, a biblical synonym for the gospel, the doctrine and also the truth, one must make certain that the religion one is practicing complies with Jesus' teachings. Jesus declared himself the selfsame Truth in John 14: 6. Both terms, Faith and Truth, point to the same thing, namely, the system of beliefs Christians recognize as the NT doctrine. If this is so, what then will cause the Church to go astray in the Last Days as predicted by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-4? "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." The Greek term *apostasia* is translated according to its definition in verse 3; "falling away." Verses 10-12 of this same chapter support Isaiah's prediction that the Church's error will be fatal; "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." Another example can be seen in 1 Timothy 4: 1-3, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." Why is this future deception so strong that many will believe and accept it as the infallible truth? The reason so many will be led to spiritual ruin is because the deception will be invisible to the naked eye. Jesus and the apostles warned of its stealthy nature. It bears the resemblance of religion, righteousness, and godliness, but its end is destruction. Those that look to apply the Timothy text to religious bodies fulfilling the literal descriptions Paul gave the young minister, must prove that the Second Coming of Christ occurred during such time as well, according to 2 Thessalonians 2: 3, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition..." That is to say, that the Second Advent "immediately follows" the falling away also

known as the great transgression (Psa. 19: 13). Christ's Return cannot occur unless the apostasy as revealed in the eyes of the prophet Isaiah has come to pass.

There is also, the issue of having to explain thoroughly the presence of the Antichrist and his expulsion from the Temple of God as well. Although this eschatological symbol for Satan is not used in the Thessalonian text, he is referred to in such a way that the believer is able to associate and identify him throughout the Bible. It should be easy to follow his course throughout the Sacred Canon by the generous description that the Spirit provides us of the nature of his sin: pride, abuse of power (esp. the law to deceive), perfidious nature, avarice character and so forth. For example; Paul portrays him as the "son of perdition", a description that Jesus also used to refer to Judas Iscariot, John 17: 12; "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." This epithet is a quality that can be used to learn of the so-called "mystery of iniquity" that involves this hardened enemy of Jesus and his gospel. We know from the scriptures that Judas was a devil, a traitor and a lover of bribes. We also know that he cared not for the poor and needy while supping all the while at the Lord's table and yet, none of his fellow disciples knew of his treachery and greed except Jesus. Only the Lord could reveal him! Doesn't that follow the same scenario Paul gave the Thessalonians; "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..." (2 Thess. 2: 8). This is just one example where the Spirit speaks "expressly" concerning the end-time (eschatological) event we recognize as the apostasy. To say that the apostasy occurred at any other time without proving the accompanying events that precede or follow afterward, would be anachronistic and unsound. Paul warned Timothy about this practice in 2Tim. 4:2-4 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 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; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." In a word, to be instant in and out of season means to avoid anachronisms in the discernment and application of the Word of God.

I am a firm believer that the entire Story of Redemption is contained in the Sacred Canon from start to finish. Most believe that although, one can read about this great epic narrative of salvation culminating with a supernatural transport to heaven, it is impossible to comprehend how it will take place. Didn't Jesus declare himself as the "Alpha and the Omega?" And isn't he also described as the "Amen" and the "Author and Finisher of Faith?" Therefore, I believe that the entire Story of Redemption, complete with all the hows and whys are neatly compacted in the Bible. That is, the Bible should reveal the antichrist and should make it unmistakably possible to identify him today. The Bible also reveals the Second coming of Christ coming with clouds with mighty power to avenge the saints and establish his Kingdom. The Great Tribulation period is another eschatological event that occurs during the Second Coming yet, it will not be recognized by the World because Satan will blind the eyes of Church leaders with a "strong delusion." Thus, instead of warning the Church of impending danger, they will mollify the church's unrest and rebellion with "peace and safety," when there is no peace (1 Thess. 5: 3). Does not Paul speak of a "strong delusion" that would come upon those that would not continue to embrace God's Truth revealed in the Doctrine of Jesus Christ? There is a great alarm sounding that the ears of the so-called wise do not hear; "Whosoever

transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds,” (2Jn 1:9-11). At this point in time, false doctrines cover the face of the Earth introducing licentiousness and perversion throughout. This condition of anarchy and *unbridledness* is the work of the many antichrist that surround the house of the Lord’s elect lady and her children (a reference to the end-time remnant). The apostle John reveals that all, excluding this mysterious “house” (the recipients of his letter of confirmation in the truth) abide inundated in dense darkness represented by the influential threat of antichristian doctrines. In short, this “house” represents a scriptural position in the doctrine of Jesus Christ as noted in verse 9. Find this entity, and you will find the light of the gospel truth.

Tangible Evidence

The next issue that requires explanation deals with tangible evidence pertaining to the cause of the apostasy. When I say tangible, I mean the dynamics of the falling away. No living Christian has witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, we see its influence in the Church. Jesus’ resurrection serves as the basis for Christian faith. It’s as if we were actually there and witnessed it ourselves. Hebrews 11: 1 records, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Further, in verse 6 we read, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” The same concept applies to the end-time apostasy. Of course, we do not see the entire religious world covered in disease from head to toe as Isaiah foretold because we’re not looking for an apostasy with the eye of faith, but with the natural eye. Paul said to the Corinthians in 1Cor_ 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Similar language to that of Isaiah’s is found in the NT; Jude 1: 22-23 says, “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” Why this warning? What is the writer implying here? Jude is describing different degrees of unbelief; some that are doubtful may be seized from the fire (condemnation), but concerning others, one does best to stay away from them because of their obstinate unbelief and strong denial of the Truth. Jude is not referring to the literal defilement of the flesh, but to the doctrinal perversion that clothes the individual. Jude 8 tells us also that “they defile the flesh” that is, the Church as a whole, referring to the spiritual Body of Christ. Part of their rebellion involves despising church government and detracting the apostolic body referred to here as “dignities.”

Before moving on, it would be wise to examine the nature of the epistle of Jude. Jude has a twin sister epistle, 2 Peter (chapter 2); the only difference is that Peter predicts the future stealthy entrance of the antichrist into the Church, while Jude, as a faithful archangel sounds the alarm that leads the charge against the same Antichrists already in the Church. One predicts their invasion while the other witnesses it, but it is undeniable that they both speak of the same intruders. It is impossible to date this epistle with any certainty; a date between 67 and 80 A.D. is likely. There is no precise internal evidence that can be used to date it accurately, and there is good reason for that. 2 Peter has been dated approximately 67 A.D. shortly before Peter’s death around 67 or 68 A.D. Both epistles write about apostate false teachers that have led the Church to ruin, and both

serve to unmask the Antichrist and his doctrine. It is here that the believer's faith is greatly tested, whether to take the conventional approach and attribute a preterit view to both epistles, or to make a logical and timely application of both epistles in order to preserve the purpose of each in chronological order, or as Paul put it; "instant in season and out of season?" Interestingly, both 2 Peter and Jude initially belonged to the category of books called the "Antilegomena" meaning "disputed writings." Early Church fathers sincerely questioned their authenticity to the point that neither had any or very little circulation in the early Church because of their brief content and lack of application. Their imprecatory nature does not harmonize with the message of grace contained in the majority of other NT books. Both invoke a curse upon the apostates and carefully weave a garment of vengeance and vindication in order to clothe the faithful with strength to resist the powerful influence and of the malicious defectors. Neither writing contains a hint of compassion for those that conspired against the Master that paid a high price for their initial redemption. The writer's objective is to disclose these hypocrites and expel them from the midst of the assembly. Another difficulty that contributed to the delayed acceptance of these epistles is the speculation among scholars at large that Jude contains quotes from spurious writings, namely, from The Book of Enoch and The Assumption of Moses. This theory cannot be proven with any certainty either. Therefore, if the Spirit prevented the rejection of these books through enough biblical affinity to other canonical writings; because there is in fact, enough internal evidence to tie Peter's Second letter to the first, and therefore, more than sufficient proof to bind it to Jude, then it is vital for us to understand their appeal to the Old Testament vision which affords us a broader view of each account mentioned. Afterward, it becomes necessary to bring the application to the New Testament Church. The ultimate test of faith in the Sacred Canon rests in accepting that, due to the uniqueness of Jude's content, the epistle remained sealed and impenetrable to the church until the time of the manifestation of the "son of perdition."

In my view, there are two astounding assertions exhibited in the Jude text, the second being superior to the first. The first is that verse 3 of this epistle reveals the great battle of God Almighty against the Dragon called Armageddon. Therefore, the first weighty contention I will entertain deals with this decisive battle. The tone of Jude's letter denotes a moment in Christianity of great danger and a time for decisive and immediate action. The call is for spiritual warfare against antichristian opponents that have abandoned the truth and threaten the complete destruction of the Church. In verse three, Jude sounds the spiritual trumpet to alert the preserved in Christ, to "contend earnestly for the faith." The term *preserved* alludes to the few faithful that the Lord has spared from among the Church that were not been deceived by the antichrist. In recalling Isaiah's vision of this apostasy, he sees only a small remnant preserved from the Body of Christ's chronic condition of rebellion, "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah," (Isa. 1: 9-10). The expression, "contend earnestly" is one word in the Greek language, *epagonizomai* and is used only once in all the NT. It means to *contend to the point of agony* for the truth delivered *once for all time* unto the saints. The reason for this cry for all out battle is stated in verse four (4), "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle Peter warned

of their coming, (2 Peter 2: 1-3). In this text Peter reveals that their admission into the Church was through “damnable heresies” that served to corrupt the gospel and lead God’s people to destruction. Paul also declared that heresies were necessary in the Church in order to identify the genuine believer in Christ, 1 Corinthians 11: 19; “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” This text corroborates the Christian’s earnest desire for the manifestation of the sons of God. The purpose of Jude’s letter is to warn God’s remaining faithful against the heresies that were devouring the saints. Jude also undertakes the task of unmasking the antichrist along with the “signs and wonders” with which he has totally fascinated the unsuspecting leading them into the deepest state of rebellion, poetically described elsewhere in the scriptures as “the lowest hell.” As noted before, the antichrist bears the resemblance of Judas Iscariot that secretly betrayed the Lord unbeknownst to his disciples. As Jesus alone could unveil his true identity, so it is in this situation by means of Jude’s narrative. The decisive challenge before the believer is to clothe himself with Jude’s scathing words and cast him out, as it is written; Job 40:9-14 “Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.” Satan’s final demise is foreshadowed countless times throughout the OT Vision, however, Revelation 12 offers the fulfillment of the same in symbolic language.

Verse 14 and 15 of Jude boldly announce the Second Coming of Christ and his work before Him, which, in turn directs us to the second fascinating assertion; the Word is made flesh anew! “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” If I’m not mistaken, this text alludes to the time of the harvest in one of Jesus’ end-time parables. The parable of the Wheat and the Tares also supports the stealthy entrance of heresies into the Lord’s blessed field, the church (1 Cor. 3: 9). The scripture says that “men slept”, depicting two things that occurred at the same time; one, the complacency on the part of church leaders, and two, the Lord withholding revelation and judgment necessary for the unmasking of the “children of the wicked” abiding in the midst of the faithful. This last contention is supported by Paul’s reference to the “time” of the revelation of the antichrist; 2Thess. 2:6, “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.” Jesus explained that it was imperative to withhold his revelation because of the danger that an untimely manifestation of the Lord’s judgment to destroy the tares, would also terminate the faithful. It is worthy to consider also, that the Master described the time of the revelation of the wicked as the “harvest.” I strongly believe that he was referring to the Day of Judgment. Mark 4: 26-29 “And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Needless to say, the sickle is a symbolic instrument for judgment.

So then, from this we must gather that the Lord was withholding the outpouring of the curse upon the transgressors until the fullness of the maturation of both, the faithful (righteousness) and the wicked (transgression). Matthew 13: 30 states, “Let both grow

together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” The reserving of judgment is depicted in the scriptures as the Lord “sleeping”; a reference to his patience, forbearance and longsuffering.

- Psa. 44:23 “Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.”
- Isa 42:13 “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”
- Isa 51:9 “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?”

Peter describes the Lord’s forbearance as his earnest desire that all men should repent, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” 2 Pet. 3:9. Also pertinent is 2 Pet. 2: 3, “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” This text suggest that judgement would not sleep for much longer.

Another supporting text is found in Romans 8: 19-22 “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;” (key word: manifestation). The term “creature” alludes to the Lord’s spiritual creation, the Kingdom of Heaven or the Church.

Jude’s role is that of Captain of the Host, leading the charge against the antichrist in the person of Michael the Archangel. Didn’t Paul warn that the Lord’s archangel would cry out as a trumpet announcing the time of Jesus’ return? 1Thess. 4:16 records; “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first...” First of all, is this literal or symbolic language? The natural man would say that it is concrete, whereas the spiritual man would determine that is symbolic. It should be no mystery as to whom embodies the role of Captain of the Lord’s Host in the battle against the antichrist. Consider the following scripture:

Daniel 12:1-4 “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be *a time of trouble*, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and *seal the book, even to the time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

Jude 9 “Yet Michael the archangel, when *contending with the devil* he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord *rebuke* thee.”

Rev 12:7-11 “And there was *war in heaven*: Michael and his angels *fought against the dragon*; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

Is it not obvious then, that when taken as a whole, the language surrounding the archangel is symbolic in nature? Of course, if any man chooses, he can isolate any scripture verse and apply it as he sees fit. But that would be a product of one's own conceit, because, alas, serious bible students recognize that type of interpretation as a no-no. Divine counsel always shows the way; 2 Peter 1: 19-21 "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that *no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This means that one is forbidden to *isolate* one prophecy from another when the Spirit is attempting to direct us to a single thought for the accurate and faithful interpretation of the fulfillment of any event in its own season. Taken separately, the Daniel text is unequivocally connected to Matthew's eschatological discourse over the literal destruction of Jerusalem in that it refers to the Great Tribulation Period some scholars *wrongly* claim to have been fulfilled AD 70. Notwithstanding, even though both accounts are trustworthily connected in a spiritual sense, some elements from the greater prophetic vision are not found in the Olivet Discourse! Did Michael the archangel appear in AD 70 to defend God's chosen people? If he did, that detail must have slipped Matthew's mind! However, he did mention the appearance of "the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Verse 31 adds, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," (Matt. 24: 30b-31).

Jude 9 is totally mystical in nature! The account of Michael contending with the Devil more accurately alludes to a different biblical account related to Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3: 1-2; "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" This text, along with the Jude and Revelation verses reveal one of Satan's tactics employed by him throughout the ages and especially during the trial of Christian faith. That is, that of an accuser and detractor. His presence before the priesthood is to provide false counsel. Satan appears in the end time to prevent the cleansing, salvation and manifestation of the sons of God! Regarding this period of time, Jesus asserted that, had not the Lord shortened the tribulation period, no one would be saved. The point is that, although the characters are different (Joshua for Michael), the prophecy still holds true, regardless. I am a firm believer that the *body of Moses* alluded to in the Jude text refers to the Law of Moses, since the writer steers the reader to Old Testament accounts pertaining to judgement, as it is written, "I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself," (Psa. 119: 52). Jesus also spoke of "eating his flesh and drinking his blood", including "properly discerning his body" while partaking of the Lord's Supper (Joh. 6: 51-56; 1 Cor. 11: 29). Both scriptures deal with the discernment of the doctrine revealed in the gospel of Christ. Does the Word we partake of render an indictment or an acquittal with respect to our position in Christ? Does it strongly rebuke the doctrine we practice, or do we receive the highest praise?

Determining the language of the Revelation text is easy. It is symbolic, as well as the rest of the book! And a symbol does not represent itself, but stands for something else! Any of the elements of the text interpreted at face value is wrong from the start. With this in mind, does John see visions of an actual war in Heaven? No! Heaven is a symbol a lofty realm, or if you will, for the "heavenly places," an expression found

throughout Paul's epistle to the Ephesians with references to the church, (Eph. 1: 3, 20; 2: 6; 3: 10; 6: 12). I might add that the 6: 12 text reveals that the Christian war against the devil and his angels occurs in the *Church* represented as false teachers. Another suitable reference is 2 Corinthians 11:14-15, which says, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness*; whose end shall be according to their works."

Proof of the Apostasy

Back to the question of tangible evidence. Strong's Greek Dictionary defines apostasy as *defection, abandonment and a falling away*. This definition alludes to the forsaking of one's own former beliefs. A pictorial definition of apostasy in the Bible is depicted as breaking the Lord's covenant. For the sake of being honest, only those walking in truth can fall away, if they deny the true doctrine and faith they once possessed! This definition is crucial for the purpose of accurately identifying the antichrist. In other words, individuals and churches cannot fall from something they have never continued in! Therefore, the term apostasy applies solely to the true body of believers that have faithfully persevered in the truth as it has been revealed by the Spirit throughout the centuries since the inception of the primitive church. It is absolutely necessary to acknowledge the character of apostasy in order to understand the concept. Going back to the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Jesus described the good seed as the "children of the kingdom," (Matt. 13: 38). And in Luke's account of the Parable of the *Sower*, the seed grown on good ground represents those individuals that hear the word, retain it, and bear fruit with perseverance. Both references describe the conservative Christian that models his entire conversation; manner of worship and lifestyle commensurate to the Word of God, never straying, neither to the left, nor to the right. This definition of the genuine believer begs the question; how then did the so-called upright man in all his ways, fall from grace? If the apostle Paul predicted a universal falling away from the truth; are we then to conclude that at the Lord's Return, no one would be found walking in truth? In Luke 18: 8b, Jesus asked the same question, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Like it or not, the answer is an emphatic, no! Any interpretation otherwise, nullifies the concept of Paul's "universal" apostasy.

There must then be *tangible proof* that reveals without a doubt in what scriptural place and which of all the doctrinal practices observed by the church, allowed the surreptitious entrance of the damnable heresy that lingered in the church's courts undetected until the proper time of its revelation. In other words, why couldn't the church detect and condemn the evil seed (heresy) as soon as it was sown within its doctrine? What led to its failure to capture the truth, persevere in it, and do with it as with other biblical practices of handing it down to future generations? The heresy entered the church in the form of a binding universal law for the entire church. Psalms 94: 20 offers the following; "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" and Revelation 2: 13 confirms by saying, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." A seat in the church is a position of authority and power. Satan's seat within the church is described as the "scorner's seat," (Psa. 1: 1; 26: 4-5). Jesus warned that Satan's brood would abide among the *called* until the harvest. Elsewhere, Isaiah 28: 17 describes the heresy and the agents

of lies as using the law as a place of refuge to hide the so-called church's death pledge, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." What better place for Satan to hide than in the church's very courts of righteousness. The antichrist's false scepter is "necessary inference." Although the Bible assigns the Body of Christ two authoritative methods for introducing action, namely; an apostolic direct commandment and an apostolic approved example (1 Pet. 4: 11), church leaders have introduced a third method; necessary inference. The only ingredient needed for the scattering of God's people, is man's own opinion. Remember that Jesus allowed both the wheat and the tares to grow together in the same field until the church yielded all the gospel fruit it was required to produce, before ushering in the Day of Judgment, also known as the time of the harvest. Does the Bible reveal the transgression that led to the straying away from the true doctrine of Christ? There is only one place in all the NT that allows this to happen, and that is the context of 1 Corinthians 11: 1-16.

The Conservative Church of Christ is the only Church that is recognized by God as his NT people. Jesus claimed to have built a single church, a church that bears no denominational name, perfectly abhorring false doctrines, superstitions and secular interpretations of the Bible; a people "zealous of good works." However faithful the church has continued throughout the centuries, it has never resolved the issue of the proper function of each gender within the worship service. In every other aspect, the church is completely accurate in its discernment of the Word, except when it comes to the principle Paul established in 1 Cor 11: 3, what we will call, "The Order of Authority." Some describe the principle in one word, "headship," and still others identify it as, "Order of Subordination." All these descriptions are correct. The important thing is that all understand that there are ranks established here. Under this principle lie many practices that pertain to the proper manner of worship unto God: prayer, edification, the woman's silence and subordination, the artificial head covering, lifting up of holy hands, dividing the church to edify, Sunday school, both men and women's physical arrangement and apparel. As a whole, these practices compile what the Spirit describes as the Christian Conversation, a manner of living based on biblical principles and values that constitute Christian custom and tradition; some dating back as far as the Adamic Dispensation. What the order of authority does is set boundaries and limitations on both men and women associated to their own respective roles. Ultimately, it is up to every individual to decide, both men and women, what each will choose to do with the divine apostolic counsel. This choice is submitted in verse 13; "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" It is this place in the law where Satan was allowed entrance into the church, and thus, opened the floodgates of death and hell in the form of multiple opinions over the matter. This is the reason why John speaks of many antichrists appearing at the last days.

This is also the place where all believers "cast their own lot" as a means of determining God's will over the matter. Now, even though Paul is dealing in particular with the regulation of the practice of prayer in the assembly, notwithstanding, he covers the believing woman's subordination in other facets of her life; marriage, in the appeal to Eve's subjection to Adam and shamefacedness and modesty in the hair length principle, etc. In doing so, we should understand that, as the Lord established decrees and laws in the arrangement of the universe, he is attempting to do the same in his spiritual creation,

the church. Back to the point of discussion; the Church has always had serious issues with the context of 1 Corinthians 11. To this present day, there are so-called conservative Churches of Christ that allow women to cover while others do not, yet both abide unequally yoked together. Some women speak, even teach, in adult Bible and Sunday school classes (when the church divides to edify), while other churches don't allow divisions or women to exercise leadership positions intended solely for men. Some women wear men's apparel (pants) and short hair, contrary to Paul's appeal to natural instinct, etc. In short, there is still unresolved confusion, doubt and uncertainty within the Lord's spiritual arrangement. This is because the Lord has allowed all men to make up their own minds over the matter, and consequently, church leaders have converted the way of the upright into the way of licentiousness. This attitude has induced the church to follow the ways of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Babylon. In the meantime, church leaders mitigate this embarrassing wound of rebellion and the scattering of the people with standards such as the Alexander Campbell's adopted peace slogan that says, "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; and in all things, love." It matters little who coined the phrase, the important thing is that it has become the church's sacred Urim and Thummim for consulting the Sacred Codex. The interesting thing about the artificial head-covering issue is that it has never been resolved since the inception of Paul's counsel, and nowhere else does the NT speak of the practice; the saying then, is dark, for there is no universal imperative elsewhere or an approved example to confirm the precept. Only clear cut support for the commandment can shed light over the matter, however, there is none in the context of 1 Corinthians 11 because it is shrouded primarily by man's false interpretation of the Age recognized as "The Earnest of the Spirit" (Eph. 1: 13-14; 2 Cor. 1: 22-23; 5: 5). There has never been a certified assertion over the artificial head covering that has obligated the church to deal with it as a matter of faith directly affecting the fellowship of the brethren. It is not seen by Church leaders as a reason that the brethren should divide over. They deal with it as a matter of personal choice and justifying all opinions under the canopy of Romans 14. And that is why the subject has remained latent and asleep in the midst of the church's courts since the Apostolic Age. This also justifies what Jesus taught in his parable, viz., "while men slept, the wicked one planted evil seed in the Lord's husbandry."

The Absence of Sin

Paul introduces the principle of subordination in 1 Cor 11: 3, then explains the reason this order is required in the assembly. He was not rebuking the church at the time, nor did he make it crystal clear whether the precept should be observed by Christians throughout the gospel dispensation. First, he praises the Corinthians and the church as a whole for keeping all the traditions handed down to them up to that juncture. But then, he proceeds to introduce something new, the order of authority, leaning heavily in favor of the practice. However, because he mentions "prophecy," church leaders have surmised that the practice was merely used provisionally during the beginnings of the church when it practiced spiritual (miraculous) gifts for the confirmation of the truth. Others believe that it was a particular practice based on cultural customs of the time and nothing else. The fact of the matter is that no one, not a single church member had ever, since Paul's discourse, rose up and confirmed the practice as a viable commandment for the entire Christian Age consequently breaking fellowship with the entire so-called conservative Church of Christ, and condemning as heretics those that refused to keep the ordinance as

a genuine article of faith! However, when that happened, from that point onward, the once faithful church became apostate in the eyes of the individual that acknowledged and ratified the precept as law, as it is written; “I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments,” (Psa 119:106). The ESV version translates, “(ERV) “Your laws are good and fair. I have promised to obey them, and I will keep my promise.” Every conservative Christian has vowed the same at baptism, viz., “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” In a prophetic vision found in Isaiah 43: 3-4, we read of the Lord forsaking all nations in order to provide his servant Jacob with safety, because he was honor-bound by his sacred oath and the covenant; “For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.” If only one individual stands on the side of the right while the entire world defects from the truth, what do you suppose the Lord is beholden to do for that one individual? Was not Elijah the prophet, representative of the end-time remnant left alone against unnumbered worshipers of Baal? Did the Lord abandon him to side with the multitude of evildoers? Before the precept became law, there was no accusation of transgression against the church from the part of God. The Spirit covers this issue well and in a manner relatively easy to comprehend. Consider the following text:

Rom. 4:15 “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.”

Rom. 5:13 “(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

Rom 7:7-12 “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”

Ezek. 18:21-22, 24 “But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. [...] But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

Job 33:27-30 “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”

Using Paul’s reasoning, he establishes that before the affirmation any principle as law in the church, there can be no sin, for the law serves to manifest sin. Neither can there be any divine wrath, and ultimately, no rebuke nor condemnation against the church. We must grasp this meaning because it is tantamount to differentiating between the Dispensation of Grace and the Dispensation of Wrath and Judgment. It also helps us to understand that those that died in Christ prior to the sanctioning of the Law and the ushering in of judgment, did receive the crown of life. However, after the head covering precept received divine confirmation as universal law (bound by apostolic authority) and rejected by the church, from that point forward, all the church’s former righteousness is

no longer counted unto her as worthy of eternal life. Question; “Is the way of the Lord unequal?” (Ezek. 18).

The truth of the matter is that, for centuries, since Paul introduced the question, the church has been debating over the subject and over all the other supportive premises associated with the proper functions of each gender in the assembly without ever coming to an imperative conclusion satisfactory enough to dissolve all controversy and doubt! The church is not universally in one accord over the matter! There is confusion, doubt, strife, doublemindedness, indifference and every abominable form of unbelief from one local church to the next! And still, preachers have the audacity to call this *unity in diversity*! Conversely, the Spirit calls it a scattering of the people. Why is the church in such a condition? Proverbs 29: 18 warns, “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law,” (ESV). The primary reason church leaders reject the covering precept is because they claim that they no longer have the gift of prophecy in the assembly. Judging by the condition of the church, I submit that I must fearfully agree.

The Origin of the Law

God presents the believer with many challenges. This is what makes the Christian journey the greatest undertaking in the World. As we walk through the Pentateuch, stroll among the mystic OT shadows and feast on language; historic, symbolic, poetic and angelic, we are enraptured by the voice that continues to inculcate in us the purpose of our lives here on Earth; service to the Master and to our fellow man. Our primary song of degree has been to continue to march on to Zion, the Wonderful City of God! However, this walk is not free of trial and tribulation. Although many noble men and women have attempted to introduce the covering practice as an article of faith, and even though they have endured many hardships and afflictions both physically and emotionally, none have taken the trial to its zenith. James submits the following, (Jms. 1:4), “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” James presents the believer with the ultimate challenge, martyrdom! When Jesus gave up the ghost at the cross, he died wanting nothing, for he said; “It is finished.” The Christian must also die to the former house in order to put on the new, (2 Cor. 5: 1). A more thorough reading in James is recommended;

Jas 1:2-12 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But *let patience have her perfect work*, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

Christians are commanded to ask for wisdom in time of need. However, this does not only apply to persistent praying for it. Wisdom, as well as the miracles and wonders performed by Jesus and his apostles, is vouchsafed to the believer for the purpose of

confirmation. If the believer is performing something related to the Lord's master plan and design for man's salvation, He is honor-bound by his oath to confirm the work of his disciple by granting him the required wisdom to escape the trial, (1 Cor. 10: 13). James deals with a type of universal trial, the same that every Christian will be subjected to in the discernment of the Word by the Spirit of God. The trial involves being forsaken and abandoned by the Lord in order to test the believer's stamina, patience and ultimately, his faith. The Christian will be left alone, and he will feel it all over his being, emotionally, physically and psychologically. An excellent example of this is found in Psalms the 38th chapter (v. 2-5), "For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." Though promised to taste desertion and neglect for a short season, Jesus made it clear that he would not leave us "comfortless," John 14:18 "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The Greek term for comfortless is *orphanos* meaning orphaned. The book of Hebrews teaches that in some instances, the Lord appeals to the church as a father would his own son, (e.g., Heb. 12: 5; the book of Proverbs). This fatherly voice permeates throughout the Bible demanding that preachers do justice to the widow and the orphan. When we as Christians are left without wisdom and direction over the subject of authority (1 Cor. 11: 13), our faith and patience are immediately placed in the furnace. Will the believer succumb to the lust of the flesh (his own conceit) or endure unto perfection by acknowledging that he must keep the ordinance and reject all arguments to the contrary and if necessary, separate himself from the Church and denounce it as heretical? Does the Bible attest to anyone ever doing so? The answer is an emphatic, yes! However, this person's story is found only in writings containing challenges and promises in the NT. Nevertheless, the OT testimony offers a detailed portrayal of the faith of one that has overcome, according to the promises found in the book of Revelation. I submit the following text for review:

- Rev_2:7 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."
- Rev_2:11 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."
- Rev_2:17 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."
- Rev_2:26 "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:"
- Rev_3:5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."
- Rev_3:12 "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."
- Rev_3:21 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."
- Rev_21:7 "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

The preceding promises will be granted to him that overcomes the time of trial during the Great Tribulation Period Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24 and alluded to in Revelation 3: 10 as "the hour of temptation." The Spirit is not referring to all trials in general, but to a

specific trial that will test the entire World and especially, the church. This trial would place every disciple before the ultimate responsibility to choose between the blessing and the curse, and between life and death, as described in the Song of Moses (Deut. 30: 19). The context of Deuteronomy 28-32 deals with the Lord entreating the people through Moses that they should continue in His covenant by “keeping the commandments.” This is the whole of the Christian life as well, as Ecclesiastes 12: 13 concludes, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” If Israel were to forsake these laws, he would be liable to being severely accused of apostatizing by the Spirit of God, as it is written in Isaiah 63: 10 “But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.” Breaking the covenant is used by Moses as a synonym for Apostasy. So then, if the church failed to keep all the commandments when put to the test to choose whether the Christian woman should cover or not, what then? Would it be guilty of breaking its sacred oath to Jesus? Would the Lord not make good on his word in manifesting his anger and usher in the curse against the transgressors? The epistle of Jude contains this curse and therefore, whosoever embodies it and applies it to the unfaithful church, represents the one that overcame the trial. The idea that an individual or an entire church can “put on” the written word is supported by 2 Corinthians 3: 2-3, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”

The Commandments and the Doctrine

What are the commandments and what is the make-up of the doctrine of Christ? One can be sure that the commandments include greater works than moral and ethical practices when seen in the light of the Parable of the Rich Young Merchant; (Mark 10: 17-21). An excellent moral and ethical conduct is not enough to get us to heaven. There is more that is required! The proper worship service; what Christians practice in worship is greater than our efforts to live virtuously, though neither gives man the right to boast before God. Both, literal and spiritual works go hand in hand in the Kingdom of God. Moral living is simply the basis of Christianity. Cornelius, the Roman centurion was, without a doubt, a devout man, but he lacked conversion to Christianity before being eligible for salvation (Acts 10: 22, 47-48). Consider also that, without the sanctuary, the altar and the sacrifices, Israel was common, just as common as the nations surrounding him. However, accompanied by the priesthood, he was placed high above all other people (Deut. 4: 7-8; 28: 1). In the NT, we have the doctrine of Jesus Christ which constitutes the acts of worship required of the believer every first day of the week. They are, edifying, prayer, singing, the Lord’s Supper and the collection for the saints. All are equal in every respect, and all must be performed in a perfect manner or the “offering” becomes unacceptable. Religious bodies that do not worship as modeled in the NT, do not have God abiding among them; 2John 1:9-11 records, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” No one is morally perfect, nor will he ever be; however, one can offer a perfect worship service unto God, just as Israel could. God wants and expects to be worshiped “in Spirit and in Truth.” True worship is evidence of having fellowship with God and assures us of genuine atonement

for sin. With the proper sacrifices, the Hebrews could atone for their daily sins and continue in fellowship with the Lord. The pattern hasn't changed under the NT. Two important qualities are maintained through the proper worship service; namely, fellowship with God and atonement! Worship must never fall short of mark of excellence; Heb 11:4 "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Regarding the doctrine, Jesus taught the following in Joh 7:16-17, "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The early church persevered in the doctrine of the apostles, according to Acts 2: 42, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." To willfully reject any part of the apostolic doctrine equates, apostasy and a place among the antichrist; 1 John 2: 18-19, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Briefly: the "last time" refers to the time of the "harvest," the nature of the antichrist has been embodied by those that have rebelled against the doctrine; "they went out from us", is a reference to the doctrine of the apostles; "but they were not of us" manifests the "tares" from Jesus' parable (their end-time fruit is rebellion, therefore, they are spurious); "they were not all of us" proves that some in the kingdom were of the seed of the Devil, now exposed and overcome; (1 John 2: 12-14). John also characterizes apostates as those that refuse to hear the apostolic voice in 1 John 4: 6, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." If John's words apply to the end-time, it serves to acknowledge that his epistles remained sealed until the proper time of the presence of the apostasy and the antichrist. Both undoubtedly serve as eschatological *elements* not present in the church until just prior to the manifestation of the Lord's Second Coming. The individual with the proper doctrine can say as the psalmist, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion (lot) for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works", (Psa. 73: 26-28).

Departing From Evil — (Isa. 59: 15)

The Spirit makes it extremely clear that at Jesus' Second Coming, no one would be in the right! We already recognize that the magnitude of the apostasy is of a universal nature; how then does one prove that some would be raptured to be forever with the Lord if all went astray? Repentance, plain and simple! But first, how does the Lord deal with apostasy? What is his *modus operandi* with regards to widespread apostasy? Examine carefully what the epistle of Jude reveals:

- Not all the saved from Egypt remained faithful, (3-5). Some apostatized and were destroyed.
- Angels apostatized and condemned (6)
- Sodom and Gomorrah apostatized and were overthrown (7)
- 2 Peter 2 (Jude's sister epistle) adds that the Antediluvian generation apostatized and was destroyed by water (2Pet. 2:5)
- Cain, Balaam, Korah, and references to lifeless things, such as; waterless clouds and wells, fruitless trees, boastful and raging waves, and wandering stars; all

depict apostates. Therefore, references to foolish and darkened stars, etc., describes the Spirit utilizing apocalyptic language throughout the scriptures, especially in poetical and symbolic biblical text to depict, the end-time apostasy. And there are many more depictions of the once *faithful* man's defection and betrayal of the Lord and his true doctrine. Therefore, the Lord's consistent method of dealing with transgression is with the total deracination of the wicked.

- In Noah's time, the Lord destroyed all flesh, then started over with a small remnant of people of the same family.
- In Lot's time, the Lord overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah but spared only a very small family.
- At the outset of taking the Promised Land, the Lord spared Rahab, a harlot, and her family, but completely destroyed the rest of Jericho.
- And the psalter contains "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD." (Psa. 104:29-35)

Jude also speaks of the Lord removing his breath from the once faithful church, "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, *having not the Spirit*," (Jude 17-19).

Visions of Apostasy:

1. Psa. 12: 1 "Help, LORD; for *the godly man ceaseth*; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."
2. Psa. 14: 1-3 "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good*. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."
3. Psa. 18: 9-11 "He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and *darkness was under his feet*. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies."

The first two citations out of the psalter are in plain language and portray the end of the faithful and righteous man upon the Earth. The conservative Christian Church is no more! The 18th chapter is apocalyptic; however, it is essential for the development of two important thoughts; one, that someone sees and recognizes the failure of the faithful, and secondly, the association of darkness with apostasy. That is, that someone stood in the midst of the Church during the discerning phase of the Word and during the great trial of faith. The depiction of what the psalmist envisions is that of the Word of God embodied in a faithful disciple of Jesus witnessing the dense darkness that the defection from the truth has caused. The expression, "He rode upon a cherub" applies to the believer being enraptured by Jude's words to reprimand man's betrayal of Christ. In the scriptures, the cherub is illustrated as a swift and vindictive angel ready to avenge the righteous and to vindicate the Lord; this was a position once held by the ministers of the Church of Christ; men that were formerly clothed with ardent zeal for the defense of the gospel truth!

- Gen. 3:24 "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

- Ezek. 28:14 “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”
- Ezek. 28:16 “By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.”

Jude is characterized by this image as well, because, after all, the meaning is that of a simple messenger inherent in the term, “angel.”

Psalm 18: 9-11

The previous explanation of this text requires more depth. David authored this song. However, how does it apply to his contemporary life? David’s deliverance from Saul is a fitting pattern that matches the vision, though not entirely. The language is highly poetic for good reason. This vision looks beyond David’s literal experiences. Some language does not apply to his present situation as it might appear. The vision has a *two-fold* interpretation as do many others in the psalter. Taken as a whole, the entire chapter is filled with apocalyptic language that greatly incorporates descriptions associated with God’s fury against his enemies. In describing the Lord’s Parousia; the trembling earth, his dragon-like features (leviathan v8), David’s own righteousness, his exaltation (hind’s feet), David’s own hand smiting and persecuting his enemies, etc. These descriptions simply do not fit Jesse’s son in the least. The only explanation then would be to acknowledge that this text is prophetic and applies to the “mystical David” of the Gospel Age. However, Jesus did not visit the Earth with wrath at his First Coming, but does so at the Second. It was at this Parousia, that the Lord found himself completely surrounded by darkness, that is, ignorance and rebellion against the gospel that led to a state of apostasy. It is also the time in which the Lord endows his remnant with power to persecute the enemy, overcome and expel him from the Church. This is a vision of the Word made flesh and abiding in a pavilion surrounded by antichrist! This vision could only apply to the end-time house of the Elect Lady and her children (2 Jhn.). Another reinforcing point is that of Jesus’ First Coming. John 1: 5 records, “the darkness comprehended him not.” Although Jesus had followers, as a whole, his generation understood not the purpose of his mission to Earth! His own people did not receive him nor embraced, neither his claims nor his doctrine. However, Jesus did not behave as a despotic leviathan nor did he display the type of wrath as described in the text under consideration. Who is able to prove that Jesus persecuted his enemies until destroying them all to establish his Millennial Kingdom at his First Coming?

Isaiah Chapter 59

If there was not supposed to be anyone left in the truth or any faith left on earth upon the Lord’s Return, why does the vision (prophetic word) imply that there was someone spared from condemnation and standing in the right? Isaiah 59 will shed insight over this question. This chapter should be carefully read in its entirety.

Observation:

- (V.1-3) - The Lord has abandoned the Church, it has become a dead body (faithless, cf. Jms. 2: 26). Jesus said he would not find faith upon the Earth at his return.

- (V. 4) - Heresy, conceit, vanity have substituted the Holy Oracle manifested in the apostle Paul's counsel regarding the order of authority involving prayer and the artificial head covering precept.
- (V. 5-8) - Using spiritual language, the Spirit, embodied in the believer is witnessing the transgression taking place in the church and describing church leaders especially, as having been transformed into the devil's agents and are no more introducing righteousness into the assembly but cursed practices, depicted as "vipers and spider webs" used to entangle and confuse the members instead of delivering them from the snare.
- (9-14) - The believer (mystical witness) includes himself in the transgression; the Spirit grieving through this witness the pervading prevarication that is preventing the revelation of the truth.
- (15) – Understanding this text is tantamount to understanding the presence of the only individual found walking in the truth at the Revelation of Jesus Christ. When truth failed in the church, a single individual departed from evil, choosing rather to keep the commandment and thus, making himself a prey. This disciple was made a target of ridicule and persecution as well. At the same time, he was transported to a scriptural position without any escape, temporarily. The Jubilee Bible renders; "And the truth was taken captive; and he that departed from evil was imprisoned: and the LORD saw it, and it was displeasing in his eyes because that which is right was lost." A synonymous voice is found in Job 11: 10, "If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?" However, the TLV version is clearer; "If He comes by and imprisons, or convenes a court, who can prevent Him?" The Lord imprisons the believer with his silence! Christians walk by faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of God, (Rom. 10: 17), however, if he remains silent, which way should the believer take? None! He remains stuck with nowhere to go. There is only one place in the NT where the believer is left on his own to choose the right way based on his own knowledge of the Almighty; 1 Corinthians 11: 13! There is no example to follow, and there is no immediate confirmation of the precept for the practice of it throughout the entire Christian dispensation; so what is the believer to do? Jesus promised he would not leave his disciples orphaned forever. He promises to provide them with comfort, or a *Comforter*, if you will. That simply means, "direction." However, what happens in the meantime while the believer waits for deliverance? He behaves exactly as Jesus did at his trial; he remains dumb, for if God hasn't spoken, how will one know what to respond to the adversary or which direction to take? The believer, as his Master will feel the agony of abandonment during this time of affliction, as Jesus felt at the cross. Did the Master not cry out "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And the Psalm adds, "...why art thou so far from helping me?" In speaking to his church (prophetically) about restoration, Isaiah 54: 6-8 says, "For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." Using another illustration, the church (embodied in a faithful handmaid) is portrayed as stubbornly refusing to follow a course that led to her death, in Numbers 22: 22-33. This account is borrowed by Peter to apply to the church's hirelings (Jude 2: 16) "But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of

- the prophet.” Moses’ description of the believer embodied in Balaam’s donkey serves to underline the adamant nature of the conservative Christian that will not move forward if it means stepping into the cherub’s unsheathed and sinister sword representing God’s powerful rebuke and condemnation (judgment). That is what the epistle of Jude epitomized to the conservative disciple that chose not to go the way of apostasy. As Jesus was treated when he refused to budge from his claims, the Lord’s mystical handmaid was also beaten and virulently vituperated, by church leaders, for not following the conventional manner of walking after the bellwether wherever he goes. Isaiah 50: 7 also says, “For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.” The same elements of apostasy are found in this chapter, namely: the divorcement of God’s people because of transgression; no man was found answering the call to obedience of the commandment; darkness in discernment, and in contrast to the faithless, we find an individual that made the difference by patiently waiting for the word of faith (the Lord’s response) in much persecution; someone adamantly refusing to follow the strong delusion (the antichrist) but rather, remaining in the right way, (the true doctrine). These depictions describe the Great Tribulation Period! And if this vision serves as an announcement of what was to transpire in the Church, who was the individual that refused not to follow the lie in the form of doctrinal heresy, and what honor did this individual receive for his service? Reader, go back and read the remuneration that would be granted to him that would overcome, in the book of Revelation.
- (V 16-19) – From this point on, the prophet reveals that the Jesus’ faithful disciple found no one else standing on the side of the right, except for himself. However, something peculiar was allowed by the Lord during this moment at the crossroads of life and death; the Lord authorized this individual as His own acting arm in the assembly. This means that He *appointed* this person to lead the charge against the gospel foes, to expel them from the heavens (high places), by clothing him with garments (words) of vengeance and zeal. What individual in the church has ever received such a commission? These special garments are *the words of Jude*. The reference to the enemy assailing the church like a flood is associated with Jesus warning that Christian faith would be tested to its foundation according to Matthew 7: 24-27, and is also connected to John’s apocalyptic vision of the demise of the antichrist in Revelation 12: 15-16 “And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” Let me also remind the reader that Jude also mentions these treacherous waters of death in verse 13, “Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame...” Revelation 12 is a vision of the church’s triumph over the antichrist! However, the entire church was embodied in one person according to Isaiah’s vision! The contention against this foe occurred in the church (the heavens), where the antichrist is characterized by a dragon (a gentile ruler). Pharaoh is portrayed as a dragon and in poetic language and given the epithet “Rahab” meaning “the arrogant one.” These descriptions clearly manifest the characteristics of the antichrist. In contrast, Michael the archangel, is personified in an individual using Jude’s writings to cast down the dragon by severely denouncing false teachers and their heresies. What the heavens witnessed was a

single person standing alone against unnumbered foes. However, according to Psalms 2, the Lord empowered this person with the “rod of iron” that is, judgment, an unction, dominion and *sonship* (election, adoption) in order to overcome and preserve the seed of Christ from annihilation. Revelation 12 also depicts the great battle of Armageddon in symbolic terms. Christians are called to this unprecedented struggle for the truth’s sake in Jude 3; “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- (V 20-21) – These text contain the promise of full redemption and forgiveness. Jacob’s full pardon from transgression will be evinced by the absence of any accusation of sin from the part of God and by an assurance that there are no more demands required by the Law, for the sum of all the commandments has been obtained as Jude 3 reveals. There will also be a renewing of the covenant between the Ancient of Days and his people and an unprecedented measure of fellowship between the Lord and his New Creation, a creation composed of a new believing generation introduced into the world as *the sons of God!* This new creation is recognized in the NT as the House of the Elect Lady; (2 Jhn. 1-13).
 1. The term antichrist is an eschatological element that defines the chronological code; namely, the end-time, (the harvest).
 2. Elect Lady denotes nobility, royalty; Gk. Kuria = to Lord (Kurios), a title given to Jesus. The Elect Lady of 2 John represents the Bride of Christ; it is a divine title descended from Heaven (Rev. 21: 1-2).
 3. There are no new commandments required of this *house*, however, there is a renewing of the commandment, “to continue to walk in love.”
 4. There is no accusation of sin or transgression. They abide in the truth and enjoy fellowship, not only with the Father and Son, but with all the saved that have known and loved the truth as they do.
 5. The term “house” is peculiar as is the rest of the language here, it is both elliptical and esoteric in nature; *house*, in this context cannot mean a literal dwelling, which would be a totally non-sequitur judgment, meaning that it does not follow the line of reasoning of the text. The term house, since we have royalty present, total confirmation and fellowship with God is better translated “KINGDOM” as in the context of 2 Samuel 7. First Kings chapter 8 records the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, however, the term “temple” is not once used in reference to the edifice, instead, the expression “house” is used 20 times to describe the Lord’s dwelling place.
 6. The Ancient of Days (Elder) speaks to this house, “face to face” as Moses spoke with the Lord in the OT. This simply means that they have *direct access* to the OT voice of the Father to obtain confirmation and the authorization to exist in the world as a *renewed* religious entity; viz., “The Kingdom of God!”

Pertinent Scripture:

- John 14: 21 “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

- John 14: 23 “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”
- 1John 1:3-4 “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” The *fullness of joy* is an allusion to the promised wedding feast at the end of the Christian dispensation of Grace and the Return of the Son. Songs 3:11 “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.” And, Rev. 19:7 “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”
- 1John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”
- 1John 2:1-2 “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. This is Jacobs’s full pardon.
- 1John 2:18-23 “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” The expression “last time” should read “last hour.” At one point during this ministry, Jesus declared that there were 12 hours in the “day.” That fact is that the Master used the term “hour” to refer to many particular aspects of his own ministry. Therefore, the last hour referred to in the text, represents the time of the Lord’s Judgment. Again, the eschatological code “antichrist” leaves no doubt in placing John’s writing in their proper chronological order within *The Story of Redemption*.
- 1John 2:27 “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” This text assures the believer of the dismissal of the pedagogic schoolmaster and of the fullness of Christian maturation in the doctrine.
- 1John 3:1-2 “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” *Sonship* or adoption is defined scripturally as achieving a relationship with God as a son. This condition can only be obtained by attaining the *image* of *The Son*. Reader, recall that at the very outset of Paul’s counsel to the Corinthians (11: 1) he first urges them to “be *imitators* of him as he is of Christ.”
- 1John 3:8-9 “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he

- cannot sin, because he is born of God.” In the realm of complete righteousness and truth the danger and threat of apostatizing are no more. The antichrist has been ousted! Wherein is the danger without his presence in the church any longer? The Lord promised David that the day would come when he would establish Israel in such a way that his enemies would afflict him no more, 2Sam. 7:10 “Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime...”
- 1John 4:1-6 “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” In order to obtain perfect understanding of the application of John’s accusation against apostates, it is crucial to acknowledge the purpose of his writings. John’s letters are epistles of confirmation! Their language is unique to the circumstances of the end-time season for which they were intended. Therefore, his writings had no application to his contemporary audience; they did not experience the presence of the ominous end-time antichrist that would dethrone Jesus and sit in the Church’s legislative seat as god. Regarding this seed of evildoers, Jesus allowed them to continue in the church until the time of the harvest. This raises the question, that if John’s epistles remained sealed until their proper discernment described by himself as the Day of Judgment (1John 4: 17), what is meant by his appreciation of the Coming of Christ in the flesh? Is John claiming that *Christ* is present at the time of Judgment in bodily form? Did Paul affirm the same when he spoke of Jesus’ Parousia to the Thessalonians? Parousia; meaning corporal or bodily presence! Isn’t it crystal clear that John’s audience has received the faculty to judge the spirits, including the power to unmistakably distinguish between the righteous and the wicked? Do they or do they not know in what manner the seed of the wicked one is show love toward the brethren? Are they aware in what aspect of the doctrine are they failing the brethren? 1John 4:2-3 “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” Preachers fail the brethren when they do not acknowledge the proper season of the fulfillment of John’s claim that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This season is marked by the presence of the antichrist!
 - (1 Cor. 6: 2; Rev. 20. 4). Torment is said to be present in this period of time. Some, enjoy perpetual bliss in the truth and in fellowship with God, whereas others have inherited doubt, confusion, fear, and ignominy.
 - 1John 5:16 “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” The sin unto death is present and applicable to John’s readers. Jesus referred to this sin as “blasphemy of the Holy Ghost” Matt. 12:31 “Wherefore I

say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” The sin is defined by the context of John’s epistle as “willful apostasy.” The writer to the Hebrews also concurs; Heb. 10:26 “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...” Only in the Spirit can one acknowledge the deracination of an entire generation of a people once faithful, now lost, never again to be restored because they chose to apostatize and to deny their Lord and Master, (2 Pet. 2: 1). It’s no wonder Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 1: 5-6) illustrates the church’s apostasy as incurable; and sounding more macabre is the fact that John warns us not even to pray for such.

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