

The Mystery of Iniquity

By Leroy Surface

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 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. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

II Thessalonians 2:1-8

Introduction

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

II Corinthians 4:3-5

We are living in a very dangerous age. Nevertheless, it has always been so for the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke to the man of God, Ananias, concerning Saul of Tarsus, only three days after Saul's conversion on the Damascus road, saying, "*...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake*" (Acts 9:15-16). Years later, when Paul the apostle visited the churches to "*confirm them*" in their faith, he tells them, "*...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*" (Acts 14:22). Let's also notice Paul's

words to the saints at Philippi, **Philippians 1:29**, “*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, **not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake.***” History records the sufferings of those apostles and prophets who “*first trusted in Christ (Ephesians 1:12)*” during the first and second generations of the church.

With the exception of John every one of the eyewitness apostles, including Paul (who never knew Christ after the flesh) died a martyr’s death. The catacombs of Rome contain the bones of tens of thousands of Christians who suffered and died in Nero’s persecution of the church. Throughout a period of over a thousand years, which we now call “*the dark ages,*” millions of people, believers and unbelievers alike, were murdered at the hands of the “*Holy Roman Empire*” at the “*whims*” of one who called himself “*the vicar of Christ.*” The city of Jerusalem, which continues to be called “*the Holy City,*” has had more wars fought over it and more bloodshed in it than any other city in the history of the world. According to the words of Jesus, however, the worst is still to come. Speaking of the signs of His returning, **Matthew 24:21-22**, Jesus said, “*For then shall be **great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be** (again). *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.*” I know, both by the scriptures and by the direction of the Holy Spirit, that this generation, which began when the city of Jerusalem returned to Jewish control in June of 1967, will not pass away before all these things of which He speaks, take place (**Luke 21:29-32**). It is the “*time of trouble*” which the angel of God spoke of to Daniel (**Daniel 12:1**). The prophet Zechariah also tells us that the nations will invade Israel to capture Jerusalem. During that war, of which Jesus spoke, the city of Jerusalem will fall, and half of it will go into captivity (**Zechariah 14:2**). **Zechariah 13:8** also tells us this: “*And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, **two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.***” While the worst of this “*time of trouble*” will be in the nation of Israel, there will also be a worldwide calamity as the “*locust army*” of two hundred million will “*slay the third part of men*” upon the whole earth (**Revelations 9:15-16; Isaiah 10:21-23, 28:22**). Let’s not forget that Jesus said, “*...except those days...be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.*” “*Those days*” will only be shortened by the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.*

Matthew 24:29-30: “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then **shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven** (the glory cloud): and then shall all the tribes of*

the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

Zechariah 14:3-4: *“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east....”*

The Mystery of Iniquity

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before (in advance).

Matthew 24:23-25

It may seem an incredible thing to say, but the “*greatest danger*” the church faces in this generation is not the events of the time of great tribulation that is about to break upon the entire world. I do not say this to give anyone a false sense of security, because I can assure you that the “*church of Jesus Christ*” will **not** be caught away before the second coming of Christ, which will take place “*immediately after the tribulation of those days.*” The “*assurance*” of the children of God, who “*love the truth*” and are walking “*in the Spirit,*” is found in **Revelation 9:4**, where God, who “*commands the locusts (II Chronicles 7:13)*” says this, “*And it was commanded them (the locusts) that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*” God is going to “*seal*” a faithful remnant of His church to protect them during the time of tribulation. He will “*pour His Spirit*” upon them as on the Day of Pentecost, and they will harvest the earth (**Revelation 14:14-16**) and bring the gospel of Christ to the remnant in Israel throughout the time of “*great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be* (again).

The often overlooked sign of the coming “*tribulation,*” according to the words of Jesus in **Matthew 24:24**, are this; “*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*” It is because of these false ministries, which have worked to deceive the children of God for over nineteen centuries, that Paul said, “*the mystery of iniquity doth already work.*” It is because of these that such horrible times have come and are yet coming upon the inhabitants of the earth. It is in this

setting that I will review Paul's second epistle to the church at Thessalonica. It is a letter that was written to encourage them during a time of great persecution and tribulation against them. He indicates his reason for the letter immediately after his salutation to them. He writes, "...we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God **for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure**" (II Thessalonians 1:4). His letter is a brief synopsis of things that must happen before the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and of our "gathering together unto Him" (II Thessalonians 2:1). In the **first chapter**, Paul clearly shows that the "second coming" and the "rapture of the church" is one and the same event. The key to understanding this is found in the word "when," which he uses two times in the following verses:

II Thessalonians 1:6-10: "*Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, **WHEN the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; **WHEN he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe** (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.***" Examine these words of the apostle closely and notice that God will give "rest" to the saints "**when**" Jesus returns with His mighty angels to take vengeance on the ungodly, which will be "**when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.**" The second coming of Jesus Christ is the "blessed hope" of the saints, and the greatest nightmare of the unbelieving world; both in the selfsame day.

II Thessalonians 2:1-13

1. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him...." Notice that the subject in the **second chapter** is the same as in the **first chapter**; it is the "second coming of Jesus Christ," and "our gathering together unto him," which is commonly spoken of as "the rapture of the church."

2. "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." The "day of Christ" is His second coming; as Paul has already described in detail in the first chapter. He tells these saints at Thessalonica not to be shaken or troubled by any means by those who would tell them that the coming of Christ was at hand.

There were certain things that must take place before Jesus would return for His church.

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....” The apostle reveals two of these events that must take place before the coming of Christ to gather His people.

“...a falling away first...” The Greek word that was translated “*falling away*” is “*apostasia*,” which means exactly what it sounds like, an “*apostasy*.” Numerically, there are more “*false teachers*” and “*false prophets*” in the church of this generation than at any time in history. The “*apostasy*” is not something that is going to happen in our future, because it was already beginning in the day Paul wrote this epistle. He says this; “*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work*” (**verse seven**).

There is a great mistake that most all teachers of prophetic events make. They believe the things which were foretold by Jesus and His apostles are still future events in our day, even though they were spoken almost two thousand years ago. When we study the prophecies of the scriptures, we should study them from the timeframe they were given in. An example of the error most modern prophecy teachers make is found in **Revelation 4:1**: “*After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be HEREAFTER.*” I have heard teachers throughout my lifetime claim that this verse speaks of the “*rapture of the church.*” They go so far as to **add to the scripture**, quoting the last phrase of this verse to say, “*...I will shew thee things which must be here, after the rapture of the church.*” Such teaching is an obvious perversion of the Word of God, and is condemned by our Lord Jesus Himself; “*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall ADD UNTO these things, GOD SHALL ADD unto him the plagues that are written in this book*” (**Revelation 22:18**).

“...and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...” Jesus promised to show John things that “*must shortly come to pass*” (**Revelation 1:1**). In the day that John received the revelation these things were future events, but, for us, many of them have been fulfilled in our past, as the record of history will show. An example of this is “*...a falling away first....*” Within two hundred years after the death of the apostle John, the church had entered into a period of time which we now call “*the dark ages.*” Gross spiritual darkness, concerning Christianity, ruled over the entire earth for over twelve hundred years. This was the time spoken of in **Revelation**

13:1-10, which was fulfilled in the “*holy Roman Empire*,” known today as the “*Roman Catholic Church*” of the dark ages.

Revelation 13:1-10: “*And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death* (wounded by the reformation); *and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies* (the pope in Rome claimed infallibility and held the power of life or death in his hands); *and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months* (the prophetic equivalent of twelve hundred and sixty years). *And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them* (Fox’s Book of Martyrs records only a few of the tens of thousands of believers who were tortured and murdered in the most horrendous ways): *and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations* (kings and emperors were required to prostrate themselves before the pope, and even to “*kiss his toe*” as an act of submission to him). *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*”

4. “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.” What could fulfill these words any more perfectly than the pope of the Roman Catholic Church during the dark ages? And what could better fit the description given of the “*harlot*” in the **seventeenth chapter of Revelation** than the apostate church?

Revelation 17:3-9 “*So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her*

forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (tens of thousands who were tortured and murdered during the dark ages and by the inquisition): and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth (the seven hills the city of Rome was built upon).”

5. “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”
The apostle had already warned the saints in the churches of the coming apostasy, and the arising of diabolical men who would deceive the people and rule over them as lords. In **Acts 20:29-30**, where Paul bids farewell to the elders of the churches at the end of his second missionary journey, he tells them, *“I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves (own group of believers) shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”* He continues in the next verse to remind them, *“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Act 20:31).*

6. “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.”
The only thing that was keeping the church from sliding into the apostasy of the false teachers was the ministry of Paul and the other apostles of Jesus who continually preached the truth of the gospel of Christ. The only guard against apostasy today is those few men and women of God who boldly declare the truth. The prophet Isaiah describes the gross darkness that covered Israel in his day; *“The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, BUT WE WALK IN DARKNESS. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men” (Isaiah 59:8-10).* In verses fourteen and fifteen, the prophet tells why darkness prevailed over the land; *“...judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh*

himself a prey.” Religious traditions of men will prevail from generation to generation, but “*truth*” will cease to exist if those men and women who truly “*know the Lord*” do not take up the truth from where it is fallen and boldly proclaim it in our generation. I declare to you that the church of the twenty first century is again “*falling away*” into apostasy. Therefore, we who “*know*” and “*love*” the truth must uphold it and thus hinder the working of that “*man of sin*” (the spirit of antichrist).

7. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” The “*mystery of iniquity*” is actually not such a great mystery. The easiest way to understand it is to see it as the counterpart of the “*mystery of godliness*,” which is revealed in **I Timothy 3:16**; “*God was manifest in the flesh*,” which speaks of Christ Jesus, as well as every child of God in whom Christ has His life. So it is with the “*mystery of iniquity*.” In **verses nine and ten** of this **same chapter** (chapter 2), Paul will define the mystery as “*the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders...in them that perish.*”

“...only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” Again, the apostle is speaking of himself and the other apostles of Christ. They would hinder the working of the Satan in the churches as long as they lived in the flesh. After they were gone, however, the apostles knew that the false teachers that were creeping into the churches would have fertile ground in which their apostate doctrines would flourish. The apostles were eventually “*taken out of the way*” by the hands of those who hated the truth of the gospel of Christ.

8. “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:” This verse spans a time frame of at least two thousand years with “*many antichrists (I John 2:18)*” being revealed throughout the centuries of time. The words “*and then*” refers to immediately after Paul and the other apostles were “*taken out of the way*.” The “*brightness of His coming*” refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

“...that Wicked (shall) be revealed...” Notice that Paul refers to “*that Wicked*,” and does not say “*that wicked one*.” There are six places in the New Testament that speak of the “*wicked one*,” and in each instance it is a reference to Satan. In none of these places, however, is the word “*one*” found in the Greek text. The word “*wicked*” in these six verses is a noun, and in each of them it speaks of our adversary, the devil. It is an error to believe that a man called “*the antichrist*” is waiting to be revealed in the last days. It is a fable of religious tradition that says Satan is going to birth a son by a human mother who will be “*the antichrist*.” Are we to believe

there is going to be another “*virgin birth*,” this time with Satan as the father? Many people believe that it has already happened, and that “*the antichrist*” is ready to appear at any time. Almost everyone has their “*candidate*” for antichrist. We should understand that today, just as it was in the day the apostle John first spoke of antichrist, there are “*many antichrists*.” The apostle John is the only writer in the scriptures to speak of “*antichrist(s)*,” and he never uses the term “*the antichrist*.” That term is not found in the KJV Bible; not once. In **I John 4:3** the apostle speaks of “*the spirit of antichrist*” saying, “*even now already is it in the world.*” In **I John 2:18** he tells us, “*even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*” Did the apostle understand that the “*last times*” would continue for two thousand years? That is very doubtful. What he did understand, however, is that the “*spirit of antichrist*” was at work in his day, and that there were “*many antichrists*.” These were the false teachers and false prophets that Satan could use to spread his lie. John never spoke of a world leader or a political figure as being “*the antichrist*.” Instead, he identified those religious teachers who deny that “*Jesus is the Christ*” as being “*antichrist*” (**I John 2:18-22**). In **I John 4:1-3**, he identifies the “*many false prophets*” as having the “*spirit of antichrist*,” and in **II John 1:7**, he says, “*For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. **This is a deceiver and an antichrist.***” These few verses in the **first** and **second epistles of John** are the sum total of everything the scriptures have to say about “*antichrist(s)*.” Everything else that people think they know about one called “*the antichrist*” was added by the traditions of men, and is not true.

Satan is “*that Wicked*” which John refers to. He is “*revealed*” when he finds human vessels to work through. Many theologians deny that Satan could be in more than one place, or work through more than one vessel at a time. Such thinking is truly ridiculous, because “*the spirit of antichrist*,” which is none other than the spirit of Satan, fills the world today. He sits in the seats of the governments of this world and he also, “*as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*” (**verse four**). When the apostle Paul was alive and proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ to the world, the “*temple*” in Jerusalem was still standing; and in daily use. With this in mind, why then did the apostle write these words to the Corinthians? “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? **If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, WHICH TEMPLE YE ARE***” (**I Corinthians 3:16-17**). In **I Corinthians 6:19-20** he writes, “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” And again in **II Corinthians 6:16**, “*What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? **for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath***

said, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*” The young man Stephen, who was stoned to death because of his testimony of Jesus which he gave before the Sanhedrin court, said in his testimony, “...*the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands*” (Acts 7:48). Paul, when giving his testimony of Jesus before the scholars at Mars Hill in Athens, said, “*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*” (Acts 17:24-25).

Paul went to great lengths to show that the temple at Jerusalem, even while it was yet standing and used daily as a place of worship, was not the Temple of God. He established that the church of Jesus Christ is the true “*Temple of God,*” and that the bodies of the people are the “*Temple of the Holy Ghost.*” Why would he teach the tradition that is believed by most people today, that almost two thousand years after the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus of Rome, in what Jesus Himself called “*the days of vengeance*” (Luke 21:22); why would Paul teach that a temple would have to be rebuilt in Jerusalem before “*the man of sin, the son of perdition,*” whom Paul in this verse calls “*that Wicked,*” could sit “*in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God?*” It is obvious, when we see what Paul knew the temple of God to be, that he speaks of a time after his departure when Satan, working through false teachers, would succeed in setting his seat in the house of God and be ignorantly worshiped by many in the church.

Both Paul and Peter died a martyr’s death at Rome during Nero’s persecution of the church. Before their “*departure*” they had both warned against the false teachers and false apostles that would creep into the churches in the absence of themselves and the other apostles. All the other apostles, with the exception of John, were martyred during the same time period. Satan was “*standing in the wings,*” waiting for the apostles to be “*taken out of the way*” so they could no longer hinder him in his ambition to be “*god*” in the church. In **Isaiah 14:13-14**, Lucifer’s (Satan’s) ambition is revealed; “*For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will BE LIKE the most High.*” Satan’s “*plan a*” was to ascend into heaven and take the place of God on the throne; however, because of Jesus Christ, his “*plan a*” failed completely. In **Hebrews 2:14** Paul, speaking of Jesus, says, “*...through death, He (Jesus, for the true believer) destroyed he that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*” Satan was cast out of heaven when the blood of Christ was shed at Calvary. It took the blood of the Son of God to defeat Satan in heaven, and it takes

that same blood to defeat him on earth. “*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*” (**Revelation 12:11**).

Satan’s “*plan b*” is revealed in the words I have bolded in the above paragraph; “*I will sit **also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.***” These words define the location of Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem, which was still standing in the days of Isaiah. Satan succeeded in establishing his throne in that temple. The proof of this was seen by the prophet Ezekiel when God, in a vision, took him to the temple in Jerusalem to show him why the presence of God was departed from it; and why Jerusalem and the temple must be destroyed. The first abomination was an idol, which God called an “*image of jealousy,*” which stood in the entry gate to the altar. The second abomination was the discovery of a “*secret chamber*” in which the seventy elders of Israel offered incense to images of creeping creatures and abominable beasts that were portrayed on the walls. Next, he found the women of Jerusalem, sitting in the northern door of the temple, worshiping Tammuz, the god of flocks. Last, but not least, he found the young men in the temple, between the porch and the altar, facing the east and worshiping the rising sun. God’s Spirit had long since departed from the temple, and Satan had succeeded in his ambition to “*sit*” in it.

Since the time Christ redeemed His church at Calvary and God poured His Spirit into it on the Day of Pentecost, the church of Jesus Christ has been the “*Temple of God.*” Never again will there be a building that qualifies to be called the Temple of God. When John saw the vision of the holy Jerusalem in **Revelation 21:22**, he wrote, “*I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*” It is in this interim period of time (almost two thousand years from then until now) that Satan has worked continuously to show himself to be god, even in the church which is called by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“**...whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth...**” Immediately after the deaths of the apostles, even before the first century of the church had passed, the “*church*” began its rapid slide into the dark ages of apostasy. Within the third century, the slide was complete when Constantine, the emperor of Rome, took up the banner of the cross to make war against the pagan nations and force them into “*Christian*” baptism at the point of the sword. The pope in Rome declared himself to be infallible, and began a reign of terror over the consciences of men that continued for over twelve hundred years until the times of the reformation of the sixteenth century. The sword of man had never succeeded against the apostate church, but “*the spirit of His mouth*” did. When men like Martin Luther began to

stand boldly against the errors of the church with the truth of God on their lips, the apostate church, that first deadly “*beast*” of the **thirteenth chapter of Revelation**, received a deadly wound in one of its heads. The “*truth*” that Luther preached was simply this, “*the just shall live by faith.*” No longer could the “*fear of death*” hold the entire world in bondage to a man who declared himself to be the “*vicar of Christ,*” because they could have “*life*” through trusting in Christ, who “*loved us and gave Himself for us*” (**Galatians 2:20**). Were the popes of the Dark Age’s antichrist? Yes, they were, because it was the “*spirit of antichrist*” that worked in them. Sadly, however, the reformation was not the end of the apostate church. It did, however, give a “*deadly wound*” to its head, but the scripture tells us that the “*wound*” was healed. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other reformation ministers sought only to “*reform*” an apostate church, when they should have totally abandoned its doctrines and sought out the original foundation of the church as laid by the apostles of Jesus Christ. The truth is, they loved the apostate church. They made the same mistake the children Israel made after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Even in their captivity, they learned to love their captors. The prophet Jeremiah records, “***We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: FORSAKE HER, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies***” (**Jeremiah 51:9**). Martin Luther had no intention of destroying the Catholic Church. He sought only to correct a few of its errors. He did not forsake the church; instead, the “*church*” forsook him. It excommunicated him and condemned him to death with a decree that anyone could slay him at any time in any place with the sanction of the church. Luther and the other reformers truly dealt the “*beast*” a deadly wound to the head, but contained in their “*reform doctrines*” was the seed of the next apostasy, which would not be seen in its fullness until many years later.

I believe that Martin Luther was a great man of God, at least in the early days of the reformation. He was willing to lay his life down for the truth that God had shined into his heart, and God preserved his life to fulfill the mission He had given him to do. Luther’s revelation of justification by faith was only the first plank of the true foundation of the church, however. Others would follow who would receive even greater light of truth. The Moravian revival that began with the aid of Count Zinzendorf of Germany brought a greater insight into the truth than Luther understood. Their revelation was also very simple, which was expressed in these words, “*Saving faith brings both holiness and happiness.*” John Wesley was brought to true salvation by the gospel preaching of Peter Bohler, a Moravian evangelist, and went on to impact the western world with his message of “*sanctification by grace.*” Out of the sanctified revival came the Pentecostal revival of the early twentieth century. Each of these movements received more light from

God than the one preceding, but sadly, as has been the case with every true move of God, the Pentecostal revival, which I am a product of, has also seen a “*falling away*,” i.e., an “*apostasy*” among its ranks. This cycle of revival and falling away has repeated itself several times since the reformation, until, at this present time there is very little evidence in the world of a true move of God.

“...and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” With these words, Paul lets it be known that the apostasy, which would come soon after the apostle’s departure, would be in its fullest manifestation at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. While the preaching of the truth of the gospel of Christ will hinder its flow in the world and destroy its working in those who receive the “*love of the truth (verse ten)*” and the “*faith of Christ*” (**Galatians 2:16**), only the soon coming of Jesus Christ will absolutely destroy the mystery of iniquity, when Satan is bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (**Revelation 20:2-3**).

9. “Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders...” The words “*even him*” are not found in the Greek text, but were added to indicate “*that Wicked*” whose coming is “*after the manner of the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*” With these words, we understand that the “*mystery of iniquity*” is the working of Satan, the “*antichrist spirit*” in and through human vessels, in the exact manner that the Holy Spirit of God works in and through His ministers. The structure of this verse is very similar to **Ephesians 1:19**, which speaks of the working of the Holy Ghost both in Christ and in those who have received the Spirit of Christ; “*...the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to (after the manner of) the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead....*”

I received a vision from the Lord in July of the year 1969. I saw a spirit in the form of a bird come upon a woman who represented the church. My first thought was of the Holy Ghost that descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove (**Matthew 3:16-17**). I even heard a voice speaking to the woman, saying, “*Thou art a son of God.*” I was amazed at the things I was seeing and hearing, and, at the first believed it to be a wonderful thing. It was not long, however, before the woman began to exalt herself, telling the people to “*Look to me! I am the one the spirit came upon; Look to me! I am the one the voice spoke to.*” I wondered (in the vision), “*how can she have a wrong spirit when I saw the Spirit come upon her exactly as it did Jesus?*” It was at this point that God, in the vision, told me about a false spirit that was coming to the churches, and many of them would receive it as the Holy Ghost. He pointed out to me that I did not see a “*dove*,” and I did not hear a “*voice from heaven.*” He

made me to know that, “*As there are many birds, but only one dove, so are there many voices, but only one word of God, and, that there are many spirits, but only one Holy Ghost.*” As the Spirit lifted from me and I came out of the vision, I heard these words from **Revelation 18:2**: “*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every UNCLEAN AND HATEFUL BIRD.*”

These things were already beginning in the churches of that day, but the vision served to awaken me to see them and to warn, as many as would hear, of the things that were soon to come. The apostle John saw these same things in his vision, **Revelation 13:11**; “*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*” John’s vision of the first beast, **Revelation 13:1-10**, was of the first apostate church, which exercised its great power from the **third century until the sixteenth century**. The second beast, which John saw in **Revelation 13:11-18**, is the apostasy that is still rising in the church of the twenty first century. It appears as a lamb, but its voice is the voice of the dragon as it teaches “*doctrines of devils (I Timothy 4:1)*” as the truth of God. It will continue to thrive in the world and come to its fullness until the day that it is “*destroyed by the brightness of His coming.*” Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

I am Pentecostal in experience. I received the baptism of the Holy Ghost fifty five years ago on March 9, 1958. I began to speak in tongues “*as the Spirit of God gave the utterance*” (**Acts 2:4**). Fifty five years later, I still speak in tongues, but only as “*the Spirit of God gives the utterance.*” That was the way of the first century revival, and it was the way of the Pentecostal revival of the **first half of the twentieth century**. Once again, from the greatest move of God since the first century, there came a “*falling away,*” and by the third generation, many began receiving “*another spirit*” which claimed to be the “*holy Spirit.*” In the late fifties and the early sixties I began to hear reports of those ministers who were teaching the people **how** to “*speak in tongues.*” In the late sixties, there were those who were teaching the people **how** to “*be slain in the Spirit,*” and by the early eighties, those came who claimed they could teach anyone **how** to operate all nine of the spiritual gifts at will. To be in their services seemed to be a wonderful thing to those who were ignorant of the truth of the word of God and the working of the Holy Ghost, but to those of us who had received the Holy Ghost according to the scriptures, most of us knew that something was very wrong. It was all human activity at best and demonic activity at worst. Then came the laughing revival of the nineties, which was followed by the Todd Bentley phenomenon of the first decade of this century. The “*revival*” began to fall into disrepute because of the blatantly demonic activity, which had been there from the beginning, but was coming into its full manifestation.

I said that I am Pentecostal in experience. With that said, I must tell you of the first prophetic words I ever heard from the Spirit of God. It happened on June 21, 1965 as I was attending the wedding of a friend in a Catholic church. I was looking at the images lining both walls of the church. I studied the “*stations of the cross*” that were depicted on the upper walls. I noticed that the final station of the cross depicted Jesus’ dead body being laid in the tomb. I searched for the resurrection scene, and there was none. I had a strong urge as a young indignant Pentecostal preacher to stand and shout, “*don’t you know that He is alive.*” I resisted the urge, and as I sat waiting for the wedding to begin, I was still indignant at the “*ignorance*” of these poor people, when the Holy Ghost spoke these words to me. “*In the last days, a harlot will arise out of Pentecost that will be more vile in her affections than the Roman Catholic Church of the dark ages.*” I was shocked beyond belief. Today I realize that I have seen, not in true Pentecost, but in that which apostatized from it, the arising of the Lamb Beast of the **thirteenth chapter of Revelation**, and the worst is yet to come.

10. “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness IN them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Notice that the “*working of Satan*” is “*in them that perish.*” It is not in just one man as would be the case of one whom tradition calls “*the antichrist.*” It is the antichrist spirit that is working in the churches of them that have been deceived by either his doctrines or his signs and lying wonders. I have spoken at length of the false signs and lying wonders that have deceived so many, but now we must look at perhaps the greatest apostasy of them all.

“...because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Notice that the great deception came because of those who did not receive the “*love of the truth.*” To be saved, it is not only necessary to “*believe the truth,*” but we must also “*love the truth.*” Those who love the truth will never be moved away from it. They will take it up when it is fallen in the streets, they will stand with it when the entire world around them rejects it, and they will gladly lay down their lives for it before they will deny it. Such is the power of the truth to those who love it. There are those, however, who may profess to “*believe the truth,*” but are easily moved away from it because they yet find their pleasure in unrighteousness. Jesus spoke of those who receive the word with great joy, but quickly wither when the heat of persecution arises against them (**Matthew 13:20-23**). It is not so with those who “*love the truth.*” They can do no other than believe the truth and stand with it. “*But,*” you may ask, “*What is truth?*” Jesus gave us one answer to that question in His prayer to His Father the night before going to the cross; “***Thy word is truth***” (**John 17:17**). There are many things in the gospel of Christ, as revealed by the word

of God through His apostles, that many “*Christians*” refuse to believe because they do not “*love the truth.*”

11. “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:” The matter of believing a lie instead of the truth did not originate with the modern church. There are several ancient “*lies*” that are in full bloom in the modern churches. One of these “*lies*” dates all the way back to the Gnostics and the Nicolaitans of the latter part of the first century. Of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, Jesus said “*I hate it.*” Certainly that is enough said for anyone who “*loves the truth;*” we will likewise “*hate*” the thing Jesus hates. The doctrine of the Gnostics and the Nicolaitans teaches of a “*separation*” between the spirit and body of man. The “*spirit*” they say, is always holy and pleasing to God, while the “*body*” of the same person is vile, sinful, and corrupt. It is on the basis of this ancient heresy that many modern Calvinists believe that no amount of sin can keep a person from going to heaven if they have claimed Jesus as their savior. After all, according to their teaching, their spirit is born of God, holy, pure, and absolutely sinless. All of their sins are simply “*sins of the flesh,*” which cannot damn the spirit. This is a horrible lie from Satan that has damned millions of souls over the centuries. It is perpetuated by those who teach that a child of God has both a “*sin nature*” and a “*divine nature,*” which continually war. Some express it as the “*good dog/bad dog*” theory. Psychology, which I do not advocate, is right on this particular issue. They call it “*multiply personality disorder.*” The truth is, we, who have been “*born of God,*” have received righteousness, which is the nature of God. Sin, which is the nature of the serpent, has been “*taken away*” by the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Son of God. Our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and have never been the source of sin, not even when we were sinners. Notice what the apostle Paul tells us in **I Corinthians 6:19**; “*Every sin that a man doeth is **without** (outside) **the body;** but he that committeth fornication **sinneth against HIS OWN body.**”* **James 2:26** tells us this; “*The body without the spirit is dead.*” Understanding this, it becomes obvious that the body of man can do absolutely nothing other than what the spirit of the man does in and through it. If sin (the nature of the serpent) dwells in him, he will sin, but if righteousness (the nature of God) dwells in him, he will do righteousness. Every action of the body is an expression of the one who lives in the body, whether sinful or righteous.

The “*seed*” for the modern apostasy was planted in much of the reformation doctrine of the sixteenth century. I do not question the leading and dealing of God with Martin Luther when he was a young monk, horribly condemned by the sins that tormented his heart and mind. “*Justification by faith*” was a breath of fresh air to him, and a great light that illuminated his soul. His stand for the truth that God gave

him changed the world of his day, and delivered millions of people from the bondage of the Roman Catholic Church, *even though it did **not** deliver them from their bondage to sin.* Did Luther see all of the “*truth?*” Did all of the “*light of truth*” shine into his heart? Of course not! He was right when he taught “*justification by faith,*” but he was also very wrong to believe that sin continues in the heart and nature of those who are justified. When “*justification by faith,*” which is a wonderful revelation from God, is defined as it is today, it is neither “*justification*” nor “*faith.*” Paul exhorts us in **Hebrews 13:9**, “*Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with **grace**; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.*” The idea that a person can be “*justified by faith*” and continue in sin is a very strange doctrine indeed, yet millions today continue to trust in a perverted version of a great truth that “*has not profited them*” who have occupied it. The most “*orthodox*” among the modern teachers of reformation doctrine tell us continually that when people repent and believe the gospel, they are “*justified,*” and absolutely nothing about that person is changed. Please believe me, that doctrine has no profit for those who believe it.

John Calvin was a leader of the reformation in Switzerland. He accepted Luther’s revelation of justification by faith, but from all that I can see in the history of the man, he did not have the same heart to search for truth as Luther had in his early years. As the spiritual leader of the church in Geneva, Calvin was called by some, “*the pope of Geneva,*” and by others, “*the tyrant of Geneva.*” He believed in the death sentence for “*heretics*” and aided the Catholic Church in the apprehension and condemnation of Michael Servetus, a man who was condemned to burn at the stake for preaching against infant baptism and denying the trinity. Calvin was the man who developed the theology which is called, “*penal substitution.*” Simply stated, this erroneous theory says, “*Jesus died to take the penalty for our sins.*” It may sound good to the ear and taste sweet to the lips, but it is as the sweet wine which **Proverbs 23:31-32** speaks of, and that many people love so much; “*At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*”

“**...God shall send them strong delusion...**” Why would God send a strong delusion to anyone? The apostle gives the answer in the previous verse, “*...because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*” God sends strong delusion to those who do not love the truth. When they refuse to “*see Him as He is*” (**I John 3:2**), God “*gives them up to uncleanness*” (**Romans 1:22-24**); when they “*turn the truth of God into a lie,*” God “*gives them up to vile affections*” (**Romans 1:25-27**), and when they do not like to retain the truth of God in their knowledge, God “*gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are*

*not convenient” (Romans 1:28). They receive a very unclean spirit, a “spirit of antichrist,” which fills them with “all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, and maliciousness” (Romans 1:29). If God did all those things which are recorded in the **first chapter of Romans** against His chosen people, Israel, because they “held the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18), how will He not also do the same to a people for whom Christ died, but who refuse the truth of the gospel and continue to find their pleasure in unrighteousness? Paul speaks of these in **Titus 1:16**; “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work **reprobate.**”*

Consider the case of King Saul, the man who was chosen to be the first king of Israel. When the prophet Samuel anointed young Saul to be king, the Holy Ghost came upon him that same day, and he prophesied among the prophets. The Holy Ghost moved so mightily through Saul in those early days that it became a common saying among the people of Israel, “*Is Saul also among the prophets*” (**I Samuel 10:11-12**). There came a time however, that this humble young man became exalted in himself and thought he could disobey the direct instructions of God to him. God rejected him as king, and sent Samuel to anoint David to be king in Saul’s stead. David was only a teenager at the time, and it was a dozen years before he actually ascended to the throne. Unknown to the people of Israel, David had already been anointed to be king of Israel when he slew Goliath. The anointing of the Holy Ghost was upon him. Notice what the scripture says happened when Samuel anointed David. “*Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit FROM THE LORD troubled him*” (**I Samuel 16:13-14**). It is worthy to note as well, that King Saul continued prophesying after the Spirit of God departed from him. “*And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul*” (**I Samuel 18:10-12**). Is it really so amazing that God would “*send strong delusion*” to those who know the truth, but do not love it?

“...that they should believe a lie:” John Calvin was very influential in the development of reformation theology, giving us the Calvinist doctrines of predestination and unconditional eternal security, both of which are in opposition to the clear message of the apostles. Concerning predestination, Paul tells us, “...whom

he did foreknow, he also **did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren** (Romans 8:29). Everything God “foreknew” about man before he made man is what He created in Adam, who was “in the image and likeness of God.” God never “foreknew” a lost man, and certainly never predestined any man to be lost. The man that God “foreknew” was also predestined to be like Jesus. That was true in the original creation, and it is true in the “new creation.” The entrance of sin violated the purpose of God in His creation. Absolutely nothing could restore what God “foreknew” and “predestined” unless sin, which entered through the first man’s disobedience, could be “taken away.” This was done through the obedience of a second man, Christ, who created the “first man.” He became the “second man” in order to “take away the sin of the world” by the sacrifice of Himself. God’s purpose at Calvary was not to “punish sin,” but to “destroy sin” in as many as would trust in Him. Jesus’ death was neither “punishment” for, nor “taking the penalty” of, our sin. His death was the only sacrifice that could take sin away, and deliver its captives into the glorious liberty from sin that is enjoyed by the sons of God (Romans 8:21).

Concerning “unconditional eternal security,” there is no such thing taught in the scriptures. We do, however, have security **in Christ** (as long as we **abide in Him**). The apostle John tells us, “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*” (I John 2:5-6). Jesus tells us in **John 15:6**, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*” The answer for eternal security is simple; “*Abide in Christ;*” do not be moved away.

When John says, “**And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins,**” he speaks of something that was common knowledge to the children of God in that first century church. They understood that the eternal Christ came in the flesh for the sole purpose of offering his body and blood as a sacrifice sufficient to “take away the sin of the world.” Again, His death on the cross was not God’s “punishment” for our sins; it was the only sacrifice that could “take away our sin.” Paul confirms this in **Hebrews 10:4**, saying, “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*”

There are several other things written in John’s first epistle which he considered to be common knowledge among the believers of his day. I will present them directly from the scripture, in the words of the apostle, and simply enumerate them in parenthesis.

I John 3:5-10: “*And ye know that (1.) he was manifested to take away our sins; and (2.) in him is no sin. (3.) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: (4.) whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, (5.) neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: (6) he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (7.) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. (8.) For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9.) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and (10.) he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (11.) In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: (12.) whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*” Each of these twelve things, which I have enumerated in only six verses, was common knowledge to the children of God in the first century church. These things, which were written by the last living eyewitness apostle, are the great truth of the gospel of Christ that the church in the second and third centuries apostatized from. Sadly, she has never recovered. Only a very few, a “*very small remnant*” is being awakening to the glorious light of the gospel of Christ. They, however, are faced with a dilemma; “*will I believe what the word of God says? Or will I believe what the traditions of man say?*” Your answer to this question is most important, because in the day that we live, the delusion of Calvinism is coming to its logical end and the fullness of its error.

An error can be detected by those who have spiritual “*eyes*” to see the logical end of the error. According to the apostle Paul, the children of Israel were held in bondage to the “*curse*” of the Law of Moses, and thought it was a great “*blessing*” to them, because, “*...the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.* If they could have seen the “*end result*” of the Law of Moses, they would have believed God when He spoke to them at Horeb, and His laws would have been written in their hearts. Many Christians make the same mistake today; they believe things that are given to them by man because it sounds good to their ears, but they never consider the end of the matter. Jeremiah found this to be the case in his day, during the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. “*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and (but) what will ye do IN THE END THEREOF?*” (Jeremiah 5:30-31).

12. “*That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*” “*Looking to the end*” of Calvin’s doctrine, I saw

many years ago that if Jesus took the penalty for my sins, then I could continue to sin, and would never suffer the penalty. I knew that was not the message of the gospel. I also projected, many years ago, that the time would come that the churches would be required, by their own defiled consciences, to accept homosexuals and lesbians as “*brothers*” and “*sisters*” in Christ, because of the belief that “*we are all sinners, and we sin every day.*” It is common among many modern Calvinists to believe that God will accept adulterers and fornicators, “*as long as they are among the chosen.*” Perhaps the best known and most popular preacher of unconditional eternal security in America today teaches that a person could apostatize, and deny Christ publicly, and still go to heaven if they have ever at any time believed upon Jesus. Sadly, many “*neo-Pentecostals*” believe that God will accept adulterers and fornicators “*as long as their faith is in the cross.*” Who among them believe the words of Paul in **I Corinthians 6:9-10**; “***Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.***” We have entered into an era in which the majority of those who profess to “*believe*” do not believe that sin matters in the least. It is the theology of the day. The churches of those who espouse this teaching seem to burst at the seams, because they preach a message that is very palpable to those who find their pleasure in unrighteousness. I was listening to the teaching of a well known minister from Dallas Texas explaining to a young man that suicide is alright as long as you are a true believer, because Jesus has already forgiven every sin you could ever commit. He teaches that Christ came into the world as a “*lamb*” to “*take our sins away from the eyes of God.*” According to such teaching, sin was not the real problem that was dealt with on the cross; the “*real problem*” was God, who refused to receive sinners. The scripture says, “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*” (**II Corinthians 5:19**). The “*new*” theology teaches that God “*reconciled Himself to sinners.*” Perhaps you are a dad or a mom. Suppose that you had a son who was a liar, a thief, a rapist, and a pedophile. From the time you discovered these things about your son, you hated the things he did, and even though you still “*loved*” him, he was alienated from you by what he was. You hoped that he would change, and be reconciled to you, but the time came that you realized that he could not change himself, so you, in your love for your son, “*took the penalty*” for his crimes, and “*reconciled yourself*” to the very thing that destroyed him. A very foolish analogy, I realize, but why do we think that God has reconciled himself to the idea that as long as we are in human bodies, we will be sinful and serve sin? Why do we refuse to believe that the blood of Christ is sufficient to “*cleanse us from all sin*” (**I John 1:7**), when we can see by the scriptures that God sent Him to “*take away the sin of the world.*” He “*takes sin*” out of the heart and nature of all those

who trust in Him to do so. It is the clear teaching of the apostles, and the promise of all the prophets.

The scripture says, *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall **not** bear the iniquity of the father, **neither** shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezekiel 18:20)*. God’s message to His people through Ezekiel was that the righteous will never be punished for the sins of the unrighteous. We were all *“unrighteous,”* and Christ came into the world, not to be punished for our sins, but *“take away our sin” (John 1:29, Hebrews 10:4, I John 3:5)*, and thus He *“suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (I Peter 3:18)*. He bore our sin on the cross, and there it was destroyed, nailed to His cross. The apostle Peter confirms this in **I Peter 2:24-25**, saying, *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”*

God has always, from the beginning of the world, forgiven the sins of those who repent to Him. Jesus was not *“punished”* nor did He *“take the penalty for our sins”* in order that God could forgive us. Such thinking impugns the righteousness of God. Suppose a man had two sons. One of the sons was obedient and good and the other was disobedient and evil. What kind of man would he be if he punished the good son and forgave the evil son on the basis of the punishment of the good son? Such a man would himself be most corrupt. God did not *“spend His wrath”* on His sinless Son in order to *“save us from wrath”* while we continue in sin. We must forsake the erroneous idea that Jesus suffered punishment or penalty for our sin. Jesus’ death on the cross was not about *“punishment;”* it was about *“sacrifice.”* The animals that were offered on the altar of sacrifice, for over fifteen hundred years under the Law of Moses, were not being punished. Instead, they were *“sin bearers.”* The sins of the one who offered the sacrifice were laid upon the lamb, and the lamb died with those sins, but the one who offered the sacrifice was still a sinner, and would have to offer sacrifices continually for as long as he lived, because, as Paul says in **Hebrews 10:4**, *“...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* In **Hebrews 10:11** Paul tells us how it is under the law: *“Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, **which can never take away sins.**”* Then he tells us in the **next three verses**, *“But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins forever**, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified**” (Hebrews 10:12-14).*

Can you see it? Jesus is the *“Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* You can be one of those John speaks to in **I John 3:5**, *“and you know that He was manifested to take away our sins.”* Are you still bearing your sin? Do you still labor under what you have been told is your *“sin nature?”* You can be free, but you must know and believe the truth. First, however, you must be one who *“loves the truth.”* If your *“pleasure”* is still in unrighteousness, you **will** believe the lie that has held millions of people in bondage to sin, and sadly, in the last day, you will be lost. It does not have to be that way, however. You can be free, and in the words of Jesus, you can be *“free indeed.”* If you are one who seeks the truth because you *“love the truth,”* your heart is telling you right now, *“wouldn’t it be wonderful if it were true that I could be free from sin.”* It is true! Jesus suffered and died to make you free from sin. Those who *“love **not** the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness”* will get very angry that I dare to tell you such a thing.

13. “But we are bound to give thanks alway(s) to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:”

Justification is by faith. Faith is to *“believe the record that God gave of His Son.”* The record God gave was given by the prophets long before Jesus was born to Mary. God promised to send Christ and gave the record of what He would do in **Daniel 9:23-25**. He would *“...make an end of sins, make reconciliation from iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.”* Justification is the miracle that takes place in the heart and nature of everyone who repents and believes the gospel of Christ, which is *“the record that God gave of His Son.”* Those who are *“saved from sin”* are no longer sinners. It is not because they are stronger than others or even better in their human nature than others; it is because they are free. I see many very devout *“Christians”* who are not free within, but live very disciplined lives through the force of their human will power. I can admire their sincerity, their determination, and their desire to please God, yet to them, salvation is not a joy, but a labor, because they are not free.

In this **verse thirteen**, Paul gives two ingredients of our salvation. They are *“sanctification of the spirit”* and *“belief of the truth.”* If you *“know, believe, and love”* the truth, the blood of Jesus Christ will *“cleanse you from all sin”* (**I John 1:7**), which is what *“sanctification of the spirit”* speaks of in this verse. If you *“love the truth,”* you will not be *“deceived by the lie.”* If you *“believe the truth”* and *“trust in Christ,”* He will *“sanctify”* your spirit with His precious blood, and you will be made free.

I Thessalonians 5:23: *“And the very God of peace sanctify you **WHOLLY**; and I pray God **YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT** and **SOUL** and **BODY** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*