

Chapter Twelve

The Apostolic Prophecies

The Lion brought forth a Lamb and the Lamb brought forth a Kingdom.

Acts 2:1-18

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my

handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

The Kingdom of God burst forth from Heaven with a demonstration of the Spirit that inwardly transformed the disciples and was accompanied by some notable outward signs so that three thousand people were immediately converted. WOW. With the Lord now reigning in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, His sheep were sent forth into the midst of savage wolves to establish the Kingdom of the Lamb in the hearts of men, women and children from every other kingdom on earth.

Jesus had forewarned them that they would be faced with all manner of deceptions, persecutions, trials and tribulations that would continue till the end of the age, but with His Spirit dwelling within, the Body of Christ would go forth into this world: with His power, His strength, His joy, His love, His healing, His message of forgiveness, the free gift of His Righteousness and the promise of Eternal Life to all who would believe. Hallelujah!

Following on the heels of what Jesus proclaimed, the Apostles reinforced and added a few more details on what to expect in this world and we discover that almost all the Apostolic Prophecies can be gathered together under the following subjects: the Deception, the Apostasy, the Persecution, the Antichrist and the Resurrection. In this chapter we will also get a glimpse of some early church doctrine and practices which reveal that the fulfilment of some of these prophecies began immediately after the departure of the Apostles.

And what of Judah? And what about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel? Do the Apostles not speak of it at all? Admittedly, they speak next to nothing. However, they already had the Holy Scriptures. They already had the Lord say to them that the Scriptures cannot be broken; saying again and again that they must all be fulfilled. They already had the sure word of prophecy. Nevertheless, we do have a little squeak, and that is in this verse from Paul in Romans.

Romans 11:25-29

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance; that is God doesn't change His mind about what He has planned for them. All Israel shall be saved, and we in His church

will have a part to play in that. In the meantime, we've got work to do and the letters of the Apostles are to equip us and prepare us for the things to come. Right from the start, in the time of their writing, we find that deceptions had already begun.

Jude 1:3-4

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. 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 word lasciviousness is also translated licentiousness which colloquially rendered in our modern day means: 'a licence to sin'.

1 Timothy 6:9-11

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

As we can all appreciate, the entirety of the letters have corrections of one sort or another that bear witness to the reality of deception in the midst of the churches.

One of the often addressed problems the nascent church faced was with regard to leadership within the Body of Christ. The servant leadership that Jesus demonstrated and taught was filled with authority, but it was not authoritarian. He called for submission, but not subjugation. He came to serve, not to be served. In the Book of Acts we have Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders:

Acts 20:28-31

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

3 John 9-10

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

2 Peter 2:1-3 NKJV

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

I saw a paraphrase of these verses from **2 Peter** some time ago, can't remember where, that went something like this: "Watch out for smooth talking, money hungry Bible teachers with large followings that will attempt to exploit you with their deceptions and will give Christianity a bad name by their **deeds.**" **From the very beginning the true** believers would have encounters with false teachers, false prophets and those who draw people to themselves. It says that they have "crept in unnoticed", that they "secretly bring in destructive heresies". Paul writes extensively in 2 Corinthians to equip the church to recognise false apostles. No wonder we are exhorted to test all things:

1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV

Test all things; hold fast what is good.

The historical fulfilment of the predicted massive deception has been recorded for us by **the early 'church fathers'**. **In their writings they were from time to time refuting various** heresies that arose and we must give them credit where credit is due. Unfortunately, at the same time as they were refuting the heresies of others, they themselves fell into grievous error. Even though some perished as martyrs, from their own pens flowed forth the seeds of corruption and deception that culminated with the tyranny of the Catholic Church and that period of history known as the dark ages.

They instituted and held fast to an ecclesiastical hierarchical system that was totally **antithetical to the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles.** **They assumed authority over God's** people by making themselves preeminent and exercising an illegitimate authority that conformed to the ways of the Gentiles. It was this rebellion to the words of Jesus that opened the door to the incremental inclusion of numerous other false doctrines. Here are the commands of Jesus, reinforced by Peter, that were being totally ignored:

Matthew 20:25-28 NKJV

But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Matthew 23:8-11 NKJV

But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

If it was today that these words were spoken, I imagine the contemporary titles assumed **and given in today’s churches would be included in the above short list. Do not be called Reverent, Bishop, Pastor, etc., for we are all brethren. Nor call anyone your: Mother, Father, Teacher, Pastor, etc.** This ongoing rebellion to the words of Jesus is a serious matter in need of repentance.

1 Peter 5:1-4

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Jesus **said that you can’t serve God and mammon. Nothing wrong with money** itself, but it is the love of money which is a root to all manner of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Clearly what Paul was addressing was the motive of the heart and was exhorting them to truly serve out of love for God and man and not for the love of money. An early church writing declared that those who asked for money were false prophets (Didache 11b), except if they were asking to supply a need other than their own. If that rule were applied today it would soon sort out who were truly trusting in the Lord. Perhaps we would see the end of begging bags and offering plates prompting people to give. Giving could then be secret and motivated by the Spirit of the Lord. We would then discover who are really walking by faith.

Notice how Peter does not exalt himself over the elders he is writing to. The sort of leadership that the believers were to submit to was completely servant oriented, without titles, devoid of the lordship model of this world. Watching over the flock as an overseer

is entirely different to being a lord. The sort of overseers that exemplify the heart of God are those who really care for a person's soul. Their primary concern is to see that those that are entrusted to them receive the maximum reward from the Father. Therefore they correct and teach for the sake of others, not for position and recognition **and not for 'filthy lucre'**.

As we now look at some of the early church writings, it will show that they were actually fathers of the monstrosity we now call the Catholic Church. What follows is a few of the **notable characters from among the 'church fathers' who were responsible for the progressively downward trend in the doctrines of the post apostolic age with their corresponding heresies.**

Ignatius (50-110AD)

Although he suffered martyrdom, before his death Ignatius was one of the first on record to introduce authoritarianism in the church. The very thing Paul warned the Ephesians of in Acts 20 was beginning to happen. What follows is an example of his teaching:

Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans

Chapter VIII. Let Nothing Be Done Without the Bishop.

See that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.

Chapter IX.-Honour the Bishop.

Moreover, it is in accordance with reason that we should return to soberness [of conduct], and, while yet we have opportunity, exercise repentance towards God. It is well to reverence both God and the bishop. He who honours the bishop has been honoured by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does [in reality] serve the devil. Let all things, then, abound to you through grace, for ye are worthy. Ye have refreshed me in all things, and Jesus Christ [shall refresh] you. Ye have loved me when absent as well as when present. May God recompense you, for whose sake, while ye endure all things, ye shall attain unto Him. (Emphasis mine)

The cult like obedience this teaching espouses results in all manner of spiritual abuse and is found among people suitably described as control freaks. The above quotation became the very seed that grew up to become the institution of the Papacy and it is totally contrary to the Body of Christ being under the Headship of Jesus Christ. His writings also contained elements of the Catholic transubstantiation heresy that has people believing that the bread and wine we take in remembrance literally becomes the body and blood of Jesus.

Irenaeus (125-202AD)

Irenaeus wrote a polemic titled *Against Heresies* in about 170-185AD that was primarily refuting the doctrine of the Gnostics, yet he himself held heretical ideas. In one of his teachings he claimed that Jesus was fifty years old at His death, a statement which He claimed was attested to by at least one apostle. *Against Heresies, Book 2, Chapter 22:5*. It was not his only claim to apostolic authority for his erroneous teaching. More on this aspect of Irenaeus later.

He supported the authority of a 'bishop' as a ruler over many churches AND promoted the idea of the authority of church traditions. *Against Heresies, Book 3, Chapters 3-5*.

He sowed the seeds of Mariolatry, claiming that Mary came as the second Eve. *Against Heresies, Book 3, Chapter 22:4* **"Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith."**

He also taught the Catholic heresy that declares the Eucharist becomes the real presence of the body and blood of Christ. *Against Heresies, Book 5, Chapter 2*. What an incredible departure from sharing wine and bread at a meal and remembering Him.

Clement of Alexandria (150-230AD)

He mixed the philosophy of Plato with Christianity in his attempt to synthesise the **'wisdom' of the Greeks** with the Word of God, he thus promoted the allegorising of the Scriptures. *Clement of Alexandria: The Stromata Book 5 Chapter 1*. As a consequence He developed the doctrine of purgatory and introduced universal salvation.

Tertullian (155-255AD)

For his defence of a move of the Holy Spirit and support for the flow of God's spiritual gifts through the believers, Tertullian is to be commended. He also truthfully argued against Gnosticism, however he had a number of false ideas that later were incorporated into the institution of the Catholic Church.

He taught that the church's authority comes through apostolic succession. *The Prescription Against Heretics: Chapter 32*. He taught against widows remarrying, calling it fornication. *Tertullian: Exhortation to Chastity 1-13*. He taught baptism as a requirement for the forgiveness of sins. *Tertullian Book 1, Chapter 28*. He lays the blame for sin on Eve rather than Adam and from his aberrant theology believed that woman are to carry the guilt of it to this day. This teaching was used as support for the false doctrine **that Mary atoned for Eve's sin.**

Tertullian: De Cultu Feminarum, Book 1, Chapter 1.
And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway:

*you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily **God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die.***

Totally misogynistic and totally wrong. The Bible makes it clear: it was Adam's sin that brought in sin and death. Eve may have eaten the fruit first, but Adam was right there saying nothing and was responsible (Genesis 3:6). Christ came as the Second Adam; He alone atoned for all sin. The Scriptures make no mention of Mary being anything other than a blessed mother who had the privilege of bearing the only sinless child this world has ever seen. I guess she discovered a bit when she had her other children.

Origen (185-254AD)

Though he endured persecution and torture for the cause of Christ under Emperor Decius in 250AD, Origen was loaded with false teachings.

He believed in a form of purgatory and universalism, denying the literal fire of hell and believing that even Satan would be saved eventually. *Origen: On First Principles, Book 1, Chapter 6:3*

He believed the Holy Spirit was a created being of some sort. *Origen. Commentary on John: Book 2:6. "How the Word is the maker of all things, and even the Holy Spirit was made through Him."*

He believed that men's souls are pre-existent and that stars and planets could possibly have souls. *"In regard to the sun, however, and the moon and the stars, as to whether they are living beings or are without life, there is not clear tradition"* (Origen, cited by W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*).

Nothing but a wild speculation and not at all inspired. He also believed that Jesus was a created being and not eternal. *"He held an aberrant view on the nature of Christ, which gave rise to the later Arian heresy"* (*Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Origen).

He denied the bodily resurrection, claiming that the resurrection body is spherical, non-material, and does not have members. *"He denied the tangible, physical nature of the resurrection body in clear contrast to the teaching of Scripture"* (*Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Origen). He was condemned by the Council of Constantinople on this count.

Origen allegorized the Bible saying, *"The Scriptures have little use to those who understand them literally."* The unfortunate result of this extreme allegorical teaching is to deny the actual literal meaning of the Scriptures. A balanced approach is to see the types and symbols of historical events without losing the original plain meaning. **Much of the Church is still suffering from this man's influence.**

Eusebius of Caesarea (270-340AD)

Eusebius collected the writings of Origen and promoted his erroneous teachings. ***“Whatever proof exists that Origen and his school deteriorated the correctness of the text, it is to the same extent clear that Eusebius accepted and perpetuated that injury”*** (*Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, I, p. 387).

Constantine the Great, who had joined church and state in the Roman Empire and had thereby opened the door for the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church, hired Eusebius to produce some Greek New Testaments. Frederick Nolan and other authorities have charged Eusebius with making many changes in the text of Scripture. (Nolan, *Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate*, p. 35).

Many of the noted omissions in the modern versions can be traced to this period, including Mark 16:9-20 and John 8:1-11. After intensive investigation, Frederick Nolan concluded that Eusebius ***“suppressed those passages in his edition”*** (Nolan, p. 240). In fact, many textual authorities have identified Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the manuscripts so revered by modern textual critics, as two of the copies of the Greek New Testament made by Eusebius. These manuscripts also contained the spurious apocryphal writings, Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas. Origen had considered these two uninspired and fanciful books as canonical Scripture (Goodspeed, *The Formation of the New Testament*, p. 103).

A classic example of the incremental inclusion of false teaching is to be found in the first century document called **The Didache**, Its opening statement says, **“The teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles**, which gives it the alternative title: The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles. Though it claims Apostolic Authority and has many honourable exhortations to righteous living that can be found in the Gospels and the Letters, it also has some deviant instructions. Concerning baptism you must first fast (Didache 7), it advocates appointed repetitious prayers and special days for fasting (Didache 8), and what is written of the bread and wine we take in remembrance shows that they had already lost the significance of its meaning (Didache 9). These things may seem innocuous, however, they betray a lack of discernment and an absence of the Holy Spirit which is the hallmark of a declining spiritual life. Claims to Apostolic Authority to give credence to their writings is also a feature of some terrible teachings of other early church writers which we will see later in this study.

I could go on about John Chrysostom (347-407AD), Jerome (340-420AD, Cyril (376-444AD) and many others and show that there is more, much much more, but it isn't good for the soul to hear of such nonsense and blasphemy. I do not for one moment suggest a **perusal of all the writings of the so called ‘church fathers’**. However, there is a compendium of their writings which amounts to fully 38 volumes available in hard copy for around \$1500 or as a pdf if you are really interested. However, there are many scholars who have documented their heresies and it is probably easier and wiser to go to the critics first and then follow through on the quotations to validate.

The Ecumenical World Council of Churches advocates church unity (otherwise known as **submission to the Roman Papacy**) through promoting the writings of the ‘church fathers’,

saying that because they were closer to the time of the Apostles, their writings are closer to the true meaning of the Scriptures and thus they convince many to return to Rome. But as can be seen in the documentation above, there was a progression of false doctrines that slowly eroded their discernment and the result was the formation of the Apostate Catholic Church.

It's a miracle that they held onto the Scriptures at all. However, the false teachers come as messengers of righteousness just as Satan comes as an angel of light. They love to appear holy. Tucking a copy of the Scriptures under their arm and upholding it as the Word of God, yet at the same time promoting their own traditions as authoritative and corrupting the Scriptures as much as they think they can get away with is right up their alley.

As mentioned above, several apocryphal books were included in their Latin translation called the Vulgate: Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Sophonias and 1st and 2nd Maccabees. All these books are mixtures, containing many things true but also teaching doctrines that are contrary to the rest of the Bible. Maccabees, for instance, contains reasonably accurate history of the Jewish nation worthy of reading, but has reference to a practice of praying for the dead without condemning the deed.

It seems to me that the reason spurious books are added to the canon rather than approved books being taken away, is that the enemy knows that if you take away a book from those that are inspired, what remains is still true. Therefore, to inject error, the more effective way to deceive is to introduce deceptive mixtures by adding false teachings and false prophecies. In my online searches I discovered that we have a multitude of contemporary advocates promoting the writings of the early 'church **fathers**' AND the many books that have been designated apocrypha. The battle against deception continues.

Here we are in our time, and the effects of the deceptions that manifested in the post apostolic age are still with us. Although Martin Luther made much ground against the traditions of the institutional church of his time, there was also plenty that he held onto that included: transubstantiation, a hierarchy clergy laity system with its false form of authority, infant baptism, baptism by sprinkling, liturgically formatted meetings, the perpetuation of a form of godliness that denied the power of the Spirit, and worst of all; **the persecution of 'heretics' which happened to include Jews and Christians who** recognised and refused to submit to the same authoritarianism of the Catholics being repeated in the new church structure.

As if all the above is not enough, the Apostolic Prophecies also warned of a period of time that has since earned the title: The Apostasy, or The Falling Away.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

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; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

2 Timothy 3:1-5

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

2 Timothy 4:1-4

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

In these letters to Timothy we find the awful promise that people will turn away from the Faith. People that once walked in the Truth will turn aside to fables (2 Timothy 4:4). Whilst there is a list of rather obvious sins listed by Paul, of note there are some not so obvious characteristics of the people we are warned about:

Now, these people are particularly loving: they are lovers of themselves . . . they are lovers of money (covetous) . . . lovers of pleasure . . . having a form of godliness that denies the power thereof . . . (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

It is these sort of people that Paul warns us that we are to avoid saying, “From such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:5). But note, those that have but a form of godliness are lumped in with the brutal despisers of good, and the unloving and unforgiving. Is it that one leads to the other? Well, it seems that when persecution comes, history shows that it is religious people that end up doing abominable things to true believers. Not surprising really as it was religious people that plotted the death of Jesus.

In this letter to the Thessalonians, Paul confirms the latter day falling away and links it to being a precursor to the coming of the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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.

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;

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. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work . . .

Some contend that the great falling away was what led the world into what is historically referred to as the Dark Ages. There are a number of untenable things that negate this assumption. For instance, the final kingdom ruling the earth, that is described in Daniel Chapter 7:21, is going to be persecuting the saints immediately before the end of the age; just prior to **“the dividing of time”** (Daniel 7:25). Also, Jesus says that because of being hated by all nations, and the abounding lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. I think this time is yet to come as He mentioned **“all nations”, which eliminates the period** of the Dark Ages when the Gospel had not yet reached much of the world. The dark ages is perhaps a foreshadowing of that which is to come. The warnings we have should be enough to let us know there will constantly be false teachers and persecution in every generation. Therefore, test all things, including what I have written here and hold fast to what is good.

The mystery of iniquity has been working and certain pockets of severe persecution have already had to be endured by believers in many countries. I believe that when the time comes, we will have either the necessary grace to endure to the end, or the grace to be martyred. Here is Paul comforting the saints in their time of trial by reminding them and assuring them of the Resurrection.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-12

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; 4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our

Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 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.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 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: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Yes, there is great comfort in the knowledge of the Resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

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:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. 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; 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. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 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. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Praise the Lord, the Antichrist will be destroyed with the brightness of His coming when He comes to take us home, when He comes to raise us up on that last day. With His mighty angels in flaming fire He will burn up all His enemies. Praise the Lord. For an in depth analysis of 2 Thessalonians 2:7 see He Who Now Restrains in the Appendix.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us,

who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

2 Peter 3:1-13

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: 3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 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.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Hebrews 12:25-29

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: 26 Whose voice then shook the

earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

The resurrection of the dead is recorded to be one of the foundational doctrines.

Hebrews 6:1-2

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Ignorance of the doctrine, or teaching about the resurrection got some saints into trouble:

2 Timothy 2:15-19

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

In the above passage we find that some people had their faith overthrown by false teaching about the timing of the resurrection. These people were the first to fall prey to the devilish deception that convinced them they had been left behind. If there were other circumstances involved, we can but speculate. But one thing is for sure, it is a fiery dart of Satan that can be extinguished through faith in what the Word of God actually says on this subject. Let us take particular note from these Scriptures again:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. 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;

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints . . .

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

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: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

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:

When Christ shall come
With shout of acclamation
To take me home
What joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow
With humble adoration
And there proclaim
My God how great thou art

The Kingdom of God that was manifested in power when the nascent church received the Holy Spirit has a very simple and easy to follow path through history. It will be filled with persecutions and tribulations, it will be inundated with false teachers and all manner of deceptions and yet it will eventually preach the gospel to ALL the earth and then the end shall come. And through it all we always have the victory through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ IF we never give up on our faith in Him. Hallelujah!

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Apostles speak little of the destiny of Judah and Israel. However, these three statements from the writings of Paul admonish us to simply believe the promises of God that are found in His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

We shall pick up the destiny of Judah and Israel in the following chapters and discover what the Born Again Believers of the Kingdom of God will experience happening on the world scene during that period of time known as the latter days.

FROM SOLOMON TO THE FALL OF ROMAN EMPIRE

KING SOLOMON

KINGDOM OF JUDAH

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

ISRAEL EXILED 740-720BC

JUDAH EXILED 607-586BC

BABYLONIAN EMPIRE

MANY ISRAELITES ATTAIN
FREEDOM BECOME
KNOWN AS CIMMERIANS

JUDAH RETURNS 537BC

MEDES AND PERSIAN EMPIRE

MORE ESCAPE
BECOME KNOWN
AS SCYTHIANS

JUDAH AS A VASSAL STATE

GREEK EMPIRE
ALEXANDER THE GREAT

ISRAEL BEGINS MIGRATING
NORTH AND WEST
INTO EUROPE

KING OF NORTH and KING OF SOUTH

JUDAH BREAKS GREEK YOKE

REMAINING ISRAELITES MIGRATE
NORTH AND WEST

JESUS BRINGS
KINGDOM OF GOD

ROMAN EMPIRE

ISRAEL SIFTED
THROUGH THE NATIONS

ABOMINATION OF
DESOLATION

TIME OF THE GENTILES BEGINS

GOSPEL IS PREACHED

JUDAH JOINS ISRAEL IN EXILE

RISE OF CATHOLICISM AND THE DARK AGES

THE ROMAN EMPIRE FALLS TO ISLAMIC EMPIRE