



Enemies WITHIN

*A man's Foes shall be they of his
own household - Mt. 10:36*

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Introduction

This is one subject that grieves me to write about. It grieves me because it so personally affects me and those close to me. The Apostle John said he had no “*greater joy*” than to hear that his children walked in the truth, and so there can be no greater sorrow than to hear and see those you love walking in error. Sadly, that characterizes the vast majority of my own immediate and general physical family on earth.

The purpose of this book is not to condemn my loved ones, nor to rub it in their face. Instead, this book is designed to help them by providing a bird’s eye view of how unity within New Testament Christianity developed into denominational divisions in connection with the historical transition of the meaning of the term “church.”

Some years after my salvation as a child, the Lord called me into the ministry in a special manner. During my last six months in the Army at the Naval Air Station base in Corpus Christi, Texas, the Lord specifically dealt with my backslidden lifestyle as a Christian. Upon being discharged I returned to my home in Libby Montana where I joined a little Southern Baptist Church. During that time the Lord gave me an unquenchable thirst to learn God’s Word and practice it. I just could not learn enough, quickly enough. The Pastor saw my zeal and asked me to take the lead in the church youth group, which I gladly did. I was pressed to witness to my lost fellow workers at the Lumber mill and two professed salvation. Our church had no evangelical outreach. However, I felt I needed to lead our youth group to witness in our community. I didn’t know how and couldn’t lead until I knew what I was doing. So I went by myself door to door in our community attempting to provide a gospel witness. Through trial and error, I learned how to witness door to door and so I led our youth group to do the same

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thing. Before long I was attending other denominational evangelical meetings in our city (Church of the Nazarene; Faith Bible Church, etc.) and was attending the Ecumenical Pastor Prayer meeting. I was willing to accept anything the Lord had for me, or do anything the Lord commanded. I was attending a Pentecostal meeting that took place at the Christian book shop in town. There I was taught that I needed to be baptized in the Spirit and I was given a tape to take home to listen and do what it said. However, as I listened to it my spirit did not bear witness with what it said or asked me to do, and so I put it on the shelf for further study. I was a strong advocate of the universal invisible body of Christ doctrine, which was the subject of the very first thing I ever wrote. I became involved in home bible studies with Jehovah's witnesses and Mormon's trying to evangelize them. I cried out to God day after day to teach me His word.

During this time I lived in the same house with a young black man named Nate Robinson who had been called to preach. The Lord started giving me sermon ideas and so I began to share them with him. One day, he turned and asked, "*Why don't you preach these?*" I told him, "*I am not called to preach, but you are.*" He replied, "*Oh really? Then why is God giving them to you instead of to me? You better see why.*" What he said bothered me greatly. I had no idea what it meant to be called to preach or do anything else other than being a faithful Christian. However, shortly afterwards we drove ninety miles on a motorcycle to a youth retreat where the speaker preached on the very subject, that God has called every Christian and equipped them to a special ministry. I came forward at the invitation willing to commit myself to whatever God has called me to do. Now, I was really bugged why God was giving me sermon thoughts. A few days later in my bedroom with Nate's Bible on the Bed (I had misplaced my own and was reading his) I came to the point of absolute frustration and needed to know from God if He was calling me into the ministry or not. I had to know,

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and I had to know now. So in simple faith I bowed my head and asked the Lord to reveal it to me. I asked the Lord to show me, as I opened my Bible, His Word, so that the very first word I saw was “*preacher*.” Little did I realize that the word “*preacher*” is found only 11 times between Genesis and Revelation and seven of them are found in only one book – the book of Ecclesiastes. Therefore, the mathematical probability for randomly opening the Bible and the first word you see is “*preacher*” is astoundingly improbable. I simply closed Nate’s Bible and then let it down on the bed letting it naturally fall open. The very first word I saw was “*Ecclesiastes*” and so I breathed a sigh of relief as I believed God would have led me to see “*preacher*” if He was calling me to the ministry. However, I began to wonder what the term “*Ecclesiastes*” meant. So I looked at it again and immediately under it was the words “*Or the Preacher*.” Shocked, I then began to doubt and believe it was just chance. So I bowed my head again and asked the Lord to show me the actual word “*preacher*” in the very first verse I read if that was what He was calling me to do. I had never read the book of Ecclesiastes before. So I had left the Bible open to Ecclesiastes chapter one and so I just began to read verse one and there in that verse I read “*the preacher*.” That was too much for me to doubt and in simple faith I yielded and told my friend and Pastor that I believed God had called me to preach.

Two weeks later the church had our annual revival meeting and the Pastor told me that I was to be the preacher and would let the church determine if they thought I was called. I was terrified and prayed and put together eight pages of single spaced sermon outlines. However, to make a long story short, I got into the pulpit and was so nervous that my eyes watered where I could not read my notes. So I just leaped out by faith and preached a short sermon and the only thing I remember I said was in essence “*You can’t claim to be a Christian and live like the devil*.” Three people came forward. A woman from some other church grabbed me by the arm

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as I was fleeing down the aisle and said to me, “*Mark, the Lord is going to use you greatly.*” However, that was not convincing to me at the moment, as I fled to the Pastor’s study and would not come out for over two hours telling the Lord this is not for me.

Shortly, after that my uncle in Lexington Kentucky called me and told me, “*Mark, if the Lord has called you to preach, he has called you to prepare yourself.*” He told me that if I came down they would find a place where my wife and I could stay until we get settled and could go to Bible College. I said, I would pray about it and I did. We had just bought a trailer home for \$2000.00 and I was working the following morning at the mill. In simple faith I determined that I would put it up for sale in the newspaper on Monday and if it sold that very week we would take it as a sign that God was in it. Well, that next morning I told my fellow laborer next to me at the mill and he said I will buy it and I sold it to him for \$2500.00 and had the money before I could put it in the paper. The \$500.00 took us from our door step to the door step of my uncle in Lexington, Kentucky without a penny to spare.

Now after 41 years I look back on all of this and I have come to this understanding. Why did God use the word “Ecclesiastes” to call me to the ministry? The root of “Ecclesiastes” is *ecclesia* or the term we translate “church.” However, “Ecclesiastes” has to do with someone who either stands before the church or puts in order church things. While in school, in one of my classes, the professor made us look up the meaning of our own names. I was well known by that time as a student that ardently defended what I believed to be the truth. When it came to my turn to tell the class the meaning of my given name, I said “predestinated defender” and the professor’s mouth dropped open and there was a profound silence over all the class. What permeated that silence was the feeling of how fitting that name characterized me. Now, as I look back over 41 years I can clearly see that God had called me to a

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special ministry in regard to defending the church or setting church truth in order. I have written nearly 40 books and most of them have to do with the church, its history, its ordinances and doctrines, as the providential circumstances that the Lord has placed me in have driven me toward that end design.

I began as an advocate of the universal invisible church theory and an ardent active ecumenicalist. Therefore, I speak from experience and can say I did not come from the Landmark Baptist background, but from the very opposite background. I have been on both sides. Only now, I have had much more time to study and reflect upon the truth of Scripture, and so I speak and write from deep conviction. I know what it is to be on the other side, the wrong side.

Therefore, I can empathize with family members and friends who are caught up in the universal invisible church theory and ecumenicalism. I defended that view and so I know the arguments from firsthand experience.

This book is written with my ecumenical family members in view. It is an attempt to provide a bird's eye view why that position is wrong, with hope that God will use this book to reveal the truth to them as he revealed it to me.

Mark W. Fenison
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CHAPTER ONE

The New Testament Norm

There are four indisputable facts that define the norm of the New Testament or apostolic era.

First, it is an indisputable fact that the contextual pronouns “*we....us...ye...you*” in the New Testament books are descriptive of Christians who are like faith and order without any denominational divisions. No other kind of congregations existed between the first coming of Christ and the completion of the New Testament canon of Scripture, but one kind – congregations of like faith and order established in the apostolic faith. All the epistles were designed either to further instruct in or correct churches that strayed from “*the faith once delivered*” (Jude 3). The Pauline prison epistles were written to the very congregations that Paul had personally constituted in his first and second missionary journeys where he laid down the foundation of the apostolic faith and doctrine. They were not congregations of different denominations with divisive doctrine and practice. This is an indisputable historical fact. It is simply wrong to read into the pronouns of the New Testament the state of denominational divisions found in post-apostolic Christianity. Instead, the division into denominations that occurred after the apostolic period were the predicted apostasy (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:11; Rev. 18:4; Mt. 13; 2 Thes. 2:9-12; etc.). Church discipline and church disfellowship were designed to prevent and protect apostolic unity against total apostasy (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Thes. 3:6,14; etc.).

Second, another indisputable fact of Scripture is that immersion in water is the norm for every true believer in the New Testament.

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Jesus never called anyone his “*disciple*” other than one who had been immersed in water (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30; Acts 1:21-22). Matthew 28:19-20 is a command to make “disciples.” The Greek term *mathetusateo* translated “*teach*” in Matthew 28:19 literally means “*make disciples*.” The term “*disciple*” means “to follow” and Christ is the one they are commanded to follow – “*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded*.” Jesus began his own personal public ministry by submitting to immersion in water (Mt. 3:15-17). Hence, the very first command in the Great Commission after going with the Gospel (Mk. 16:15) is “*baptizing them*.” Immersion of repentant believers in water is the New Testament norm. The Greek has terms for sprinkling (*rantizo*) and pouring of water (*epicheo*) and although both terms are found numerous times in the New Testament, neither are ever used to describe this ordinance.

Third, another indisputable fact is that Acts 2:41-42 provides the normal New Testament pattern followed in the New Testament period:

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. – Acts 2:41-42

This passage describes their practice in keeping with the precise order and acts commanded in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. First, the gospel was preached just as commanded in the Great Commission (“*go preach the gospel*” – Mk. 16:15 “*gladly received his word*” – Acts 2:41).

Second, the believers were baptized (“*baptizing them*” – Mt. 28:19; “*were baptized*” – Acts 2:41).

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Third, the baptized were brought into a teaching assembly (“*teaching them*” – Mt. 28:20; “”*added unto them...they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine*” – Acts 2:42).

It is constituting congregations according to this pattern that scriptures refer to when we read the church has been “*fitly framed together*” or “*builded together*.”

The words “*continued stedfastly*” represent in the Greek text what grammarians call a periphrastic construct. This is where two verbs, a past tense verb is joined with a present tense verb. In this case the past tense verb is the imperfect tense. What does this mean? It means that the apostolic doctrine did not originate with that action being described, but was something going on previous in the past without defining the beginning or ending point. However, Luke provides that beginning point in Acts 1:21-22:

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. – Acts 1:21-22

This practice of preaching the gospel, then baptizing repentant believers, and assembling them around you for instruction was the pattern provided in the ministry of John the Baptist. John preached the gospel:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. – Jn. 3:36

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He then refused to baptize anyone but repentant believers in the coming Christ. Thus his baptism is called the “*baptism of repentance*” because he required repentance prior to baptism:

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: - Mt. 3:7-8

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. – Acts 19:4

After baptizing them he would then teach them or disciple them. Therefore, they were called “*John’s disciples*” (Jn. 3:25; 4:1). The Baptist had been sent to “*prepare a people made ready for the Lord*” (Lk. 1:17b) and he did it according to this threefold ministry pattern – (1) Preach the gospel; (2) baptize repentant believers in the gospel; (3) Teach them how to observe all things.

Jesus assumed this same Baptist ministry model or pattern:

When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) – Jn. 4:1-2

It was from these disciples of John prepared according to this Baptist ministry pattern that Jesus first took and habitually assembled around him constituting the church at Jerusalem (Jn. 1:35-51) which practiced this very same Baptist Pattern:

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Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. – Acts 1:21-22

It is this same Baptist Pattern that is described in the Great Commission which is to be practiced until the end of the world.

Hence, the imperfect tense used by Luke in Acts 2:42 has this beginning point in view “*Beginning from the baptism of John*” that had then continued in the past right up to Acts 2:42 on the day of Pentecost.

However, this periphrastic construct also includes the present tense finite verb of ongoing incomplete action. This means that this practice which began with John the Baptist which had continued up to the day of Pentecost is continuing to be practiced up to the actual time Luke penned these words after 62 A.D. The book of Acts ends with the imprisonment of Paul in Rome for two years (Acts 28) in 62 A.D. Therefore, this book was not written by Luke until after that two year imprisonment.

Luke is saying in the clearest possible language that what you read in Acts 2:41-42, which is inclusive of the Apostles doctrine, had been the common pattern of observance by the church at Jerusalem from its conception with the materials Jesus had taken and assembled around him from the very beginning of his public ministry until at least 64 A.D.

However, there is more. Luke does not continue to repeat this whole practice each and every time people are saved, baptized and added to the assembly at Jerusalem. Instead he takes the word “*add*” from that point forward to summarize this pattern (Acts

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2:47; 5:14; 11:24). When the numbers added were too great to count, he then used the term “*multiplied*” to summarize this Baptist ministry pattern (Acts 6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24).

But why should this be mysterious? This Baptist Pattern was the Great Commission command until the end of the age was it not (Mt. 28:19-20)? This is obviously what the church practiced on the day of Pentecost was it not? This is what the periphrastic construction demands was their consistent pattern from their conception as a congregation until at least A.D. 64 is it not? After clearly defining how they were “*added*” to this congregation at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, why would anyone imagine they would “*add*” any other way when the scripture says this was their habitual customary practice as commissioned by Christ????¹

Fourth, another indisputable fact is that there is no such thing as a congregational body of *unimmersed believers* located anywhere in the New Testament. The congregations located at Corinth, Rome, Ephesus, Colossae, Thessalonica, Antioch, or wherever else congregations were located in the apostolic era were all congregational bodies consisting of water immersed believers in Christ. This is according to the “*apostles doctrine*” founded upon the Baptist Pattern, or the pattern founded by John the Baptist.

Why are these four indisputable New Testament era facts important? They are important because they provide the basics for

¹ Some imagine on the basis of silence that this was not always their practice. However, silence should be interpreted with what is clearly stated to be their practice rather than against what is clearly stated. Some imagine the case of Ananias at Damascus or the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch show a deviation from this pattern. However, Ananias is specifically defined as a “*disciple*” and Matthew 28:19-20 defines what is a “*disciple*.” The Eunuch was known to the congregation at Jerusalem, as were those at Samaria and the congregation followed each case and set in order whatever was missing (Acts 8:14; 11:21).

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the true nature of New Testament congregations as opposed to post-apostolic multi-denominations. The New Testament congregations were all united in a common faith and practice – the apostolic doctrine. Therefore, it is a perversion of the Scriptures to claim that the pronouns “*we....us...you....ye*” in the New Testament scriptures represent post-apostolic Christians divided into opposing denominations. These pronouns historically represent Christians united by like faith and order.

It is important because no post-apostolic denomination of Christians can be rightly called a New Testament congregation or denomination if their congregations are composed of unimmersed unregenerate persons who were sprinkled or poured upon as infants at the time they were added to their assemblies. Where there is no immersion in water there is no New Testament congregation.

The doctrine of the universal invisible body of Christ is established and founded upon the interpretation that the New Testament pronouns “*we.....us....ye.....you*” are inclusive of all Christians regardless of their belief systems, regardless if they are found in various denominations or in no denomination at all, and regardless if they were immersed, poured, sprinkled or had no baptism at all. In reality these pronouns in the historical Biblical context demand the very opposite interpretation. The historical Biblical context in which they are found demand they represent only Christians who are like faith and order with each other.

The universal invisible body of Christ is in direct opposition to these four indisputable characteristics of the New Testament norm. Indeed, it is the very thing that the New Testament norm was designed to prevent and condemn.

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CHAPTER TWO

Apostolic Preventives

The very concept that characterizes the so-called universal invisible body of Christ is the very thing apostolic doctrine was designed to prevent, to warn against, as well as predict would arise in the future, as the apostasy.

Christ and the apostles knew very well that the unity of like faith and order they established would be attacked by Satan and that false teachers would arise to establish followings (denominations) that opposed the apostolic faith and order. However, they provided principles to preserve churches in the apostolic faith and order and prevent total apostasy of all New Testament congregations.

First, they constituted churches in the first century after the Baptist pattern and then reinforced that pattern by oral instruction, corrections and rebuke whenever a congregation strayed from that pattern of apostolic faith and order.

Second, to insure that all apostolic congregations had access to the apostolic doctrine and practice they provided a written defense of that faith and practice, which we now have as the New Testament Scriptures.

Third, this apostolic faith and order was provided a practice of discipline in regard to individual members that would stray from this pattern (Mt. 18:15-17; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; 1 Cor. 5:1-13), as well as disciplinary instructions against those teachers or preachers outside the membership of the congregations that would lead them away from this pattern (Rom. 16:17-18). However, what Christ and the Apostles commanded New Testament congregations to exclude from its membership; the universal invisible church body demands

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must be included within its membership. In a later chapter it will be shown that both the *universal visible* concept of the church and the *universal invisible* concept of the church were introduced in post-apostolic history for the very purpose to undermine these apostolic disciplinary commands toward those departing from the faith once delivered.

Fourth, this apostolic faith and order provided strict qualifications to prevent the selection of leaders that were unfit for leadership and who would lead congregations away from that apostolic faith and practice (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-13) and how to deal with those who violated their qualifications or attempted to lead the congregation away from that pattern (1 and 2 Timothy; Titus). However, the so-called universal invisible body of Christ demands that such unfit leadership be recognized as legitimate members of equal standing in its body.

Fifth, this apostolic faith and order gave explicit warnings and predicted the rise of the very kind of apostasy that would divide Christians into different denominations which violated the unity of “**the faith**” once delivered (Mt. 13; 24:24-25; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:11; 2 Thes. 2:9-11; Rev. 17:5). However, the so-called universal invisible body of Christ is based upon unity of experience and love at the expense of unity of faith and practice.

Sixth, this apostolic faith and order gave explicit commands to resist those who opposed the apostolic faith and practice (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Thes. 3:14; Rom. 16:17). However, the so-called “true” universal invisible body of Christ includes these heretics on an equal basis.

Seventh, this apostolic faith and order gave promise, and therefore gave hope, that such congregations founded after the Baptist pattern would be found in all generations until the coming

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of Christ (Mt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21; 1 Cor. 11:26; 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 22:16-18; etc.). However, both Christ and the Apostles made it clear, as the end of the age arrived, the apostasy would become the largest representative of Christianity, while New Testament congregations would be in rapid decline and nearly extinct (Lk. 18:8).

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CHAPTER THREE

Apostolic Prediction of Apostasy and Decline

The Scriptures predicted how the vast majority of the professing people of God would respond and treat Christ:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. –

Isa. 53:3

He came to his own and was born among the only nation of professing people of God on earth. It is the professing people of God who treated him this way, not the world.

The metaphor of “*the body of Christ*” in application to the congregations of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27) is taken from the physical body of Jesus Christ while on earth, in which he carried out His ministry within this world.

Christ and the disciples predicted that his metaphorical body of Christ would be treated just as Christ had been treated by the religious world. Secular history establishes that it has been the dominant professing Christian denominations that have been the greatest persecutors of Christians between the apostolic era and our present age.

Christ and the apostles predicted that in “*the last days*” the congregations of Christ would be persecuted, despised and rejected by professing people of God.

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For example, just before his death and resurrection and ascension back into heaven, Jesus prepared the ordained leadership of his congregation by warning them:

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. –
John 16:1-3

The term “*offended*” in verse 1 represents the Greek term *skandilizo* which literally means to “*stumble over*.” We can expect the lost world to despise, reject and persecute Christians. However, when the majority of the professing people of God do this, it can be devastating psychologically if we are not mentally prepared. Jesus is mentally preparing his congregation to expect that it will be the professing people of God that will despise, reject, oppose and persecute them, especially in the last days before His coming.

This warning was not merely applied to the Jews, as the current professing people of God, but this was true of the coming apostasy containing professed people of God (deceived and lost), as Christ warned in both the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:13-23) and in the parable of the *tares* in Matthew 13, and in his end times predictions of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:5, 24-25 that such rejection and persecution would arise within professed Christendom dominated by counterfeit Christians, which would in turn produce counterfeit denominations until the end of the age, at which time would arise a counterfeit apostolic miracle movement.

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A. Counterfeit Christianity

1. Matthew 7:13-23

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

First, notice that the “many” in the conclusion are the same “many” in the beginning of this passage in verse 13 who enter the broad way. The majority of professing Christians will be lost professors according to Christ, in contrast to the “few” who will actually be saved and manifested as saved in the Day of Judgment.

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Next notice the verses tucked into the middle (vv. 15-20) describe those responsible for leading the majority down the wrong way. He says that we can know false prophets by their fruits. The fruit of their lips and/or the fruit of their actions will contradict the revealed will of God. For example, the fruit of the actions of the Scribes and Pharisees were without spot, as “*whited*” and “*clean*” on the outside. However, their doctrine was represented as “*leaven*” by Christ. So Christ exhorted his listeners “*All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not*” (Mt. 23:3). On the other hand, there are false professors who have the right doctrine, but are without the right fruits of actions. This is a prediction that the future growth of professing Christendom will consist of a majority (“*many*”) of lost professors whereas true believers will always be “*few*” in direct contrast. This has always been the case in God’s professing kingdom (Rom. 11:1-4) from Genesis to the present.

Jesus predicted the very same thing in regard to the professing kingdom of God in the parable of the *tares*.

2. Matthew 13:24-43

24 ¶ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

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28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.....

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. - Matthew 13.

I lived fourteen years in eastern Washington State where wheat was a major crop. Unless you are well instructed, before the harvest season the average person could not tell the difference between a stalk of wheat and a *tare*. Both appear similar to each

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other. However, when harvest time comes, the grains on the head of the wheat stalk become heavy and cause the wheat head to bow downward, while the tare sticks straight up as the tare has no fruit to carry.

Tares, like false prophets can be known by the fruit of their lip (doctrine) and fruit of their actions (lives). Jesus says that Satan has planted these among the true seed of the Kingdom within this field (“*world*” – v. 38). These are not the unreligious lost of the world, but these are professing people of God who have only an appearance of salvation (tares). They are mixed together with the true children of God. The tares become the vast majority of the professing people of God by the end of the age, because the righteous or true seed don’t “*shine forth*” or are made clearly manifest until the tares are separated from them at the end of the world. The true children of God are the treasure increasingly “*hid*” among the professing stuff.

However, what is the purpose for Christ teaching all of these parables in Matthew 13? The purpose becomes apparent as you study the preceding context to chapter 13, and climax of chapter 13. From Matthew chapter 10 forward there is a constant increasing opposition and rejection of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ by the nation of Israel and its leadership. At the close of chapter 13, his own family and home town reject him (Mt. 13:54-58). Hence, this is a context of where John the Baptist and Christ are increasingly despised and rejected by the professing people of God. The parables are designed to harmonize this rejection with his claim to be the Messiah. The aim of these parables is to explain why professing people of God reject Christ’s teachings and Christ’s claims. **Rejection and opposition to truth is often an indicator of false profession and always an indicator of deception.**

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Jesus answers this seeming contradiction of opposition and rejection by the people of God to God's servants and his word by a series of parables.

First, this rejection is due to the unseen condition of the heart of the professors (Mt. 13:1-23) – it is a heart problem. The “*ground*” represents the heart. Each ground “*received*” the seed or gospel by profession. Hence, these are all heart types of those that profess the gospel. However, notice that only the fourth ground is called “*good*” by Christ, and only the fourth ground represents all the variations of good works produced by Christians having a “*good*” heart. The fourth soil represents the true children of God and the true “*seed*” in the next parable of the “*tares*.” The other three types of ground represent three classifications of false professors.

I characterize the first ground as Bro. and Sis. Hard Heart. These are the kind that profess to be saved and yet sit under preaching for years and are still ignorant of God's word and/or their lives are still void of the fruits of obedience just as before they professed. The Word of God seems to go right over their head.

I characterize the second ground as Bro. and Sis. Fizzle. They are all excited about hearing new things. However, when trouble comes from trying to practice the word of God, the truth becomes offensive to them and they turn to something else new and exciting. The word of God has no depth in them.

I characterize the third ground as Bro. and Sis. Other Priorities. These are like the rich young ruler that wants to include religion to his other stuff, but when it comes to practicing what he professes, he has more important priorities.

Second, it is a spiritual problem – Satan is at work counterfeiting children of God (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Within this primary parable

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of the tares there are two minor parables included (Mt. 13:31-34) which provide further explanation of Satan's counterfeiting work within the professing kingdom of God on earth. This mixture of look-alikes by Satan within the professing people of God makes the kingdom of God look larger than it really is – It is an appearance problem. The contrast is made between the tiny mustard seed and its final outcome. The final appearance of the mustard bush is deceiving in regard to the size of the seed planted. So also is the apparent size of the professing kingdom of God. Due to mixture of tares with the true "seed" the apparent size of the professing kingdom of God is deceiving. For example, there are 2.1 billion professing Christians on planet earth today. There are over 37,000 different denominations; everything from the Church of Unity to the Roman Catholic Church exists within the professing kingdom of God on earth.

This mixture of look-alikes comes with the leaven of false doctrines and practices. This inclusion of false doctrines and practices is the intent of the parable of the women who hid leaven in the lump. Notice, Jesus did not say she simply mixed it but "*hid*" it implying deception. She represents the corrupted professed Christian institutions under the metaphor of a woman or the Great Whore and her harlots in Revelation 17-18. She began as a true metaphorical "*chaste virgin*" (2 Cor. 11:2) but then was "*corrupted*" by false doctrine (2 Cor. 11:3-4). A corrupted "*chaste virgin*" is a metaphorical harlot. It is this leaven mixed in with the dough that makes the dough (kingdom) appear larger than it actually is. Apostate Christian institutions and their false doctrine are major physical contributors to the increased size of professed Christendom.

Third, this means the current true people of God are like a treasure "*hid*" within this field (v. 44) which are hard to find because they are hidden within the stuff of false professions that

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appears as the majority of the professing people of God. These false professors are enemies within the professing kingdom on earth, within all denominations of professed Christians, within the true congregations of Christ (as Judas) and within your own physical immediate family (Mt. 10:35).²

B. Counterfeit Denominations

1. Acts 20:29-30

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. – Acts 20:29-30

Paul predicts the origin and mechanism that Satan will use for the future rise of apostate denominations which depart from true congregations of like faith and order.

a. The Origin

The origin of apostasy comes from without and from within New Testament congregations. **From without**, “*grievous wolves enter in*” and corrupt the congregations internally. **From within**, those who are elders or leaders will rise teaching things contrary to the apostolic faith and order and “*draw away*” members after them to form new congregations that are not like faith and order which produce denominations of churches like unto them.

² The congregations of the Lord are like the “*pearl of great price*” within the hidden treasure of God’s people.

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Apostasy begins with leaders. This is why congregations are the final authority rather than any individual or small groups of individuals within a congregation (Mt. 18:16-17). This is why there are strict qualifications for the selection and ordination of church leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit.1:5-13). This is why the congregation selects and qualifies those who are to be ordained (Acts 6:5). That is why the qualified Pastor is charged with rebuking elders who go astray (1 Tim. 5:20-22).

It is the church that is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 11:1; 15:22). There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Acts 15:22) rather than in one man or one class of members.

b. The Mechanism

The mechanism for apostasy and forming congregations contrary to apostolic faith and practice are “*grievous wolves*” and internal leaders that “*arise, speaking perverse things*” that separate members from the apostolic faith and order.

The Greek term translated “*perverse*” means to “turn aside” from a path that you are on. The path or “*the way*” they were established on was the apostolic faith and practice. These men turn members aside or away from that path. They invent a new path or new “way” and thus a new kind of congregation that begins a new kind of denomination of churches.

This text is a clear prediction about how different denominations would arise by establishing new assemblies around false teachers that depart from the faith once delivered. Such contain lost professors and deceived Christians.

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2. 1 Timothy 4:1-5

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; - 1 Tim. 4:1

No text in scripture is any clearer than this text about the predicted apostasy and the origin of all false doctrine.

First, there is no ambiguity about this coming apostasy as “*the Spirit speaketh expressly*” about it.

Second, there is no ambiguity to when it will occur – “*in the latter times.*” The apostles regarded the latter times the period following the apostolic era and especially the concluding time of that period just before the coming of Christ. How do we know that? Because he places these “*latter times*” yet in the future as in 2 Timothy 3:1 he says this time “*shall come*” which means these days had not yet come.

Third, there is no ambiguity that “*some shall depart from the faith.*” You cannot “*depart from*” something you never embraced. These are professing children of God. They are not necessarily all lost professors as some genuine Christians have been deceived into embracing celibacy and observing dietary laws (vv. 3-5). Are all Seventh Day Adventist’s lost professors since they all observe the dietary laws under the Old Covenant? There are many other denominations that observe such things and there are many denominations that do not observe such things that have individuals within them that do observe such things. Apostate denominations have true people of God within them (Rev. 18:4).

Fourth, there is no ambiguity concerning what it is – “*some shall depart from the faith.*” He is referring to “*the faith*” once delivered

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(Jude 3) and “*the faith*” demanded to qualify a member worthy of being ordained to the office of Bishop or Deacon (1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1) which qualifications demand they are “*sound*” in the faith. He is speaking of the essential truths proclaimed in the public “*house of God*” which characterizes that house as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15). He is talking about “*the faith*” or the “*apostles doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). We know this for certainty, because what causes the apostasy is “*doctrines*” of demons or false teaching contrary to apostolic doctrine and practice. This is an apostasy from the doctrinal truths committed to them by the apostles.

Finally, there is no ambiguity concerning the sources of this apostasy “*giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.*” True Christians are commanded to “*try*” or put spirits to the test, or carefully examine them, by how they manifest themselves through the teaching and life of prophets (1 Jn. 4:1). It is the doctrines of the prophet and teacher that reveal the true spiritual source guiding and empowering him/her. These same spirits are capable of counterfeiting genuine apostolic power, signs and wonders (2 Thes. 2:9). Miracles, signs and wonders are not the ultimate evidence of the Holy Spirit (Deut. 13:1-5; Mt. 24:24-25). The ultimate evidence is conformation to the truth! He is the Spirit of truth, and his church institution is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” and therefore if anyone speak not according to “*this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isa. 8:20). **False doctrines are the evidence that the spiritual source of that prophet or teacher is demonic and the apostate is either a lost professor or a deceived Christian.**

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3. 2 Timothy 3:1-11

1 ¶ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

.....13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

Again, the apostles regarded the “*last days*” as a yet future time that had not yet come in his own time, but “*shall come*.” Both Paul and Peter used the phrase “*last days*” (2 Pet. 3:3) to refer to the time after the apostolic period or after their own demise (2 Tim. 4:5; 2 Pet. 1:13) that especially characterized the climatic events just prior to His coming (2 Pet. 1:10-13).

Significantly, Paul did not expect things in the future to get better and better. He did not expect that Christians would eventually win the world to Christ. He explicitly warned they would “*wax worse and worse*.” Those who ridicule the pre-millennial view as a “pesi-millennial” view are ridiculing Paul.

More specifically, the increase of false teachers and deception by professing people of God shall wax worse and worse while the true congregations of God shall suffer decline to the point they are hard to find.

4. Luke 18:8

I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? – Lk. 18:8

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This is taken from the parable of the widow who persisted in requesting from the king her desires until the king relented and gave in to her request. He is teaching his disciples to persevere in prayer during rough times. He closes this parable by applying it directly to the time just before His coming. It is a rhetorical question and the intent is to imply that prior to his coming things will be extremely rough, just as he will predict in the Olivet Discourse just three chapters later (Lk. 21).

His application is obvious. **Those who continue in the faith will be few and hard to find when he comes.** That clearly implies a decline of the faithful in the last days. The Greek text actually says “*the faith*” as it has the definite article. Persisting in prayer during rough times is essential to persist in “*the faith*” as the last days will be an attack upon “*the faith*” once delivered. The increase in *tares* and a false miracle sign and wonder movement will “*deceive many*” and draw them away from the apostolic faith and practice.

5. Luke 17:25-26

*But first must he suffer many things, and **be rejected of this generation.** **And as it was in the days of Noe,** so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. – Lk. 17:25-26*

Notice that Christ’s coming is said to be “*as the days of Noe*” and this is introduced by the words “*be rejected by this generation.*” This was a very religious regeneration of the professing people of God. The days of Noah were days of extreme wickedness (Gen. 6:5) and out of the whole world population only seven people survived the flood. Only seven people were watching and ready. Noah’s day was the day of great apostasy and great wickedness.

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6. Luke 17:28-30

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

In the days of Lot, the Lord promised Abraham if only fifty righteous people could be found he would spare it. The Lord finally promised Abraham, if only ten righteous people could be found he would spare it. However, only four people could be found. Lot's day was a day of great wickedness and apostasy. So it shall be in the coming of the Lord. Great wickedness will abound and the righteous will be in extreme decline while the apostasy shall abound.

C. Counterfeit Miracle Movement

1. Matthew 24:5, 11, 24-25

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. – Mt. 24:5

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. – Mt. 24:11

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. – Mt. 24:24-25

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There are two factors that must be established concerning these two prophecies; (1) The time of their occurrence; (2) The nature of their occurrence.

1. The Time of their occurrence:

Like many of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus used what many theologians call the telescopic method of prophecy. That means, the prophet would take a near coming event and use it to characterize an end of the world event. This is what Isaiah and Jeremiah did with the near destruction of Nineveh, Jerusalem and Babylon during their time. They described the near destruction of these cities, but went beyond the near application and applied their characteristics to the ultimate destructions and judgment that characterized the end of the world when Christ returns.

This is precisely what Jesus is doing in the Olivet Discourse. He is predicting and describing the events and destruction of Jerusalem near at hand in A.D. 70, but then applying the characteristics to the end of the world events that usher in His return. Remember, the question he is answering is “*Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” (Mt. 24:3). They were referring to his prophecy that not one temple stone would be left on top of another (v. 2). They assumed that such an event could only occur at the end of the world at His coming. Christ takes the near event which would accomplish his prediction in A.D. 70, and uses it to characterizes those things that lead up to the end of the world before His coming (Mt. 24:29-31). Indeed, he characterizes these things like birth pangs (Mt. 24:6) which increase with every generation until the baby (kingdom) appears out of a womb.

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Therefore, the prophecies of Matthew 24:5 and Matthew 24:24-25 characterize the nearer period between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70, as well as the farther and ultimate application between A.D. 70 and His Second Coming. Therefore, it applies to the whole period between His ascension back into heaven and His Second Coming.

2. The Nature of their Occurrence:

All three texts (Mt. 24:5; 11, 24-25) refer to deception (“*shall deceive many...shall deceive many.... they shall deceive the very elect*”) within the professing kingdom of God. The false doctrines brought into the professing kingdom of God by the “*tares*” and false prophets and false teachers have already deceived many true children of God. Paul clearly teaches that true children of God may be taken captive and deceived by the devil through false doctrine:

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at [Gr. eis “for”]his will. 2 Tim. 2:25-26

Peter was temporarily taken captive by Satan “for” his will (Mt.16:22-23; Gal. 2:11) just as Barnabas was (Ga. 2:13) and Demas (2 Tim.4:10).

Repeatedly throughout scriptures true children of God are warned to let no man “*deceive*” you:

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. – Mt. 24:4

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*For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches **deceive** the hearts of the simple.* – Rom. 16:18

*Let no man **deceive** himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* – 1 Cor. 3:18

*That **we** henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to **deceive**;* - Eph. 4:14

*Let no man **deceive you** with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.* – Eph. 5:6

*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 Thes. 2:3

To suggest that true Christians cannot be deceived is contrary to all the warnings of Scripture that imply they can be deceived. Have you not been deceived into believing untruths, that later, you realized were false and so turned from?? However, some errors are more serious than others. There are serious errors in regard to the essentials of salvation (2 Cor. 11:4; 1 Jn. 4:2-4; etc.) but there are serious errors in regard to essentials of service or with regard to the Baptist pattern (Acts 2:41-42; 20:29-30).

Matthew 24:5 (“***I am Christ***”) has reference to the anointed one spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures. There were only four offices in the Old Testament that were regarded as “the anointed.” (1) Priests; (2) Prophets; (3) Kings; (4) and the Coming Savior who was the antitype of anointed prophets, priests and kings.

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In the New Testament the apostles were regarded as an anointed office by the Holy Spirit with power (2 Cor. 12:12). The predicted apostolic like apostasy will claim such special anointing for the same kind of offices.

Those who were called to such anointed offices in the Old and New Testament were all of like faith and order under their respective covenants. However, this predicted anointed movement will be full of doctrinal and denominational division and as a movement will oppose the Baptist pattern or the every essentials of the “*faith once delivered*.”

The only movement within professed Christianity that claims such anointed offices is the current Charismatic movement that consists of multiple denominations which is full of division and confusion. Indeed, every member of this movement claims to have special anointing beyond merely the indwelling Spirit necessary for salvation (1 Jn. 2:29). There are even some among the Charismatic movement that claim every charismatic person is “*the Christ*” or “the anointed one” equal to Christ (The Word of Faith movement).

The charismatic movement is wholly characterized as mass confusion of diverse doctrine and practices. Indeed, no other movement is as diverse in doctrine and practice as this movement. This movement claims to be the epitome of apostolic like miracles signs and wonders, but is accompanied by doctrines of devils that deny every fundamental and essential truth in Scripture (The Trinity, justification by faith without works, etc.).

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2. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

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.

This passage deserves special attention. He first warns the Thessalonians that no man deceive them about the order of events in connection with the coming of Christ (vv. 1-3). Two events will precede the Lord's return; (1) A great apostasy; (2) Revelation of the Man of Sin. He then turns to address each of these. The last mentioned one – the revelation of the man of is dealt with in verses 4-8, while the great apostasy is dealt with in verses 9-12.

This great apostasy is characterized as an apostolic like power, signs and wonders movement, just as Christ predicted in Matthew 24:24-25. Just like Christ predicted in Matthew 24:24-25 it is associated with the last days just prior to the coming of Christ from heaven. It is a CHRISTIAN LIKE movement with APOSTOLIC LIKE miracles signs and wonders that rises up in the last days just prior to the second coming of Christ and that is why it is such a deceiving movement. It is characterized by “*lying*” signs not because the signs are not authentic, but because they confirm false doctrine instead of truth. God had appointed miracles, signs and wonders to confirm that the words of his prophets were truth (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4; etc.). Satan counterfeits the confirmation method to

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deceive Christians into believing his doctrines are truth when they are lies.

“*Deceivableness of unrighteousness*” means it is a righteousness that looks like the real thing but it is not. It is the doctrine that merges justification with sanctification as the final basis for entrance into heaven or “*another gospel*” condemned by Paul in the book of Galatians.

To say it another way, it refers to the fundamental perversion of the gospel of Christ into a gospel that includes God’s work in and through our own physical body, in addition to Christ’s works in and through his own physical body as the joint basis for our ultimate justification for entrance into heaven.

Hence, because final justification is contingent upon works performed in your own body, there is a possibility that true children of God can lose their salvation according to this gospel. Therefore, those who embrace this gospel repudiate the doctrine of eternal security of the elect.

The modern day Charismatic movement from its very conception to the present day, as a whole, preaches this gospel that ultimate salvation merges justification with sanctification based upon works, and therefore repudiates eternal security of the believer.

The modern day Charismatic movement is Satan’s counterfeit master piece. It preaches a counterfeit gospel, and is made up by a mixture of counterfeit and deceived Christians in counterfeit denominations with a counterfeit apostolic powerful experience manifested by a counterfeit love. This counterfeit movement is sweeping over the entire earth and dominating the professed kingdom of God just as predicted in scriptures.

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The word “*strong*” needs special attention. The Greek word translated “*strong*” is the very same Greek word used to describe the effectual working and power of the Holy Spirit in true believers (Eph. 2:20 “*effectual*”). This is the heart of Satan’s best counterfeit experience. He reproduces within these people a counterfeit experience that combines counterfeit fruits of the Spirit with a feeling of euphoria combined with actual power by counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders. This feel good self-absorbed powerful experience moves them away from the Word of God as final authority. Instead, it becomes the final authority in their lives even for interpreting God’s Word. However, the Scriptures command the very opposite (Isa. 8:19-20). Scripture is the final authority to discern true and false experiences. However, the predominance of a miraculous experience is why it is such a “*strong delusion*.” Many saved people will buy into this movement because they are deceived by its external counterfeit manifestations, but without actually personally experiencing or participating in the power, wonders and lying movements. They are the ones being warned not to be deceived by it (Mt. 24:4, 24-25). However, those in whom this power is actually experienced and manifested are lost professors. Their lost condition will be manifested by their “*pleasure*” in these counterfeit things, especially their pleasure in the counterfeit gospel of righteousness. Their hatred and adamant condemnation of justification by faith without works is manifested in their belief that a true child of God can lose salvation and their complete repudiation of eternal security of the believer.

The key to recognizing this counterfeit movement is its priorities. Unity of experience takes priority over unity in Truth. Their experience for all practical purposes becomes their final authority and the true basis for spiritual discernment. Its counterfeit love is manifested by the same priority. Charismatic love is characterized by its man ward priority *above* or over a Godward priority in that

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human feelings and unity take precedence over truth (1 Cor. 13:7) and God's holiness. This is a movement that ultimately interprets the Scriptures and defines truth by common experience and feelings as ultimate authority. In direct contrast, the Scriptures are final authority over feelings and supernatural experiences as well as the basis for spiritual discernment (Isa. 8:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

After describing this end times counterfeit miracle movement, Paul then contrasts those in that movement with the true people of God:

But we are bound to give thanks alway 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: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. – 2 Thes. 2:13-15

I believe the modern day charismatic movement from its conception in 1902 inclusive of its first, second and third wave is what Paul is explicitly predicting.

Conclusion

The counterfeit kingdom of God, with its counterfeit believers, and counterfeit gospel, and counterfeit denominations will increase in size and dominance within the professing people of God until it climaxes into Satan's counterfeit master piece, a counterfeit apostolic miracle movement at the end of the age. It is this

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counterfeit that opposes, rejects and despises the Baptist Pattern of faith and practice.

Apostasy from the Baptist pattern may indicate that person is a lost professor at worst, or at best is a Christian being led into deception.³

³ There is an elect bride among the elect people of God. It is true that God does not choose to reveal the truth equally to all His people. It is true that God does not reveal certain truths to certain elect in order to use them in circumstances and purposes that those who understand certain truths would be prevented from serving in.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Post-Apostolic Justification for Denominationalism

We have seen that the apostolic era of congregations were like faith and order with each other. The historical context of the pronouns “*we.....us....you....ye*” are Christians of like faith and order. We have seen the pattern by which congregations were constituted that promotes this like faith and order. We have seen the preventives put in place by Christ and the apostles that protects and preserves congregations remaining in like faith and order. We have also seen the promises that such congregations would be in every generation until Christ comes again. Finally, we have seen the prediction of apostasy that will arise within the professing kingdom of God that will promote divisions of professing Christians into different denominations that are not of like faith and order.

Now we want to turn our attention to the doctrine that was and is being used to justify denominational confusion, which is in direct contradiction to apostolic like faith and order.

A. The Universal Invisible Church Theory

Many believe that the New Testament teaches the universal invisible church doctrine. However, if this were true, then one should be able to find Christians teaching and defending such a doctrine prior to the Reformation in post-apostolic church history. However, there is no record of any group of Christians embracing,

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teaching or defending the universal invisible church theory prior to the Reformation.

Moreover, prior to the council of Nicaea in 411 A.D. there is no other doctrine of the church taught other than the local visible congregational body of Christ. Indeed, each individual congregation was recognized as a “*catholic*” church. In the Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith, the Presbyterian Church admits that the early use of the term “catholic” simply was used to contrast the Jewish demand under the Law that one must become a Jew versus New Testament congregations which accepted all races on an equal basis of membership.

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law) – The Westminster Confession of Faith
- Chapter 25 section II. – Emphasis mine.

It was not until the council of Nicaea in 411 A.D. that the concept of a *universal* visible church was first introduced by Augustine, as his interpretation of the term “*field*” in the parable of the *tares*.

What is interesting is that this interpretation by Augustine was to avoid the doctrine of church discipline and church disfellowship of the Catholics by the Donatists because the Donatists charged that the churches represented by Augustine had been corrupted due to the inclusion of unworthy members. The great Lutheran historian explains:

The Donatists...held that every church which tolerated unworthy members in its bosom was itself polluted by the communion with them; it ceased to deserve the predicates of purity and holiness, and consequently ceased to be a true Christian church, since such a church could not

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subsist without those predicates.....The Donatists maintained that the church should cast out from its body those who were known, by open and manifest sins, to be unworthy members. – Augustus Neander, **General History of the Christian Religion and Church**, Second Volume, (Crocker and Brewster, London: 1872) pp. 238, 241

The Donatists claimed that due to the apostasy that characterized the churches represented by Augustine that they (Donatists) alone were the true church, as Neander goes on to say, “*they exclaimed that they alone constituted the church*” (Ibid. p. 243).

Neander lamented that if only the Reformation doctrine had been known at this period, it could have easily resolved their dispute. He accused Augustine of inconsistency “*by supposing in his mind the same confusion of the invisible with the visible church*” (Ibid. p. 244).

Inadvertently, this is an admission that the Reformation doctrine was completely unknown at that time. Indeed, there is no record of any Christian group prior to the reformation embracing, teaching or defending the idea that all believers **on earth** consist of one universal invisible church.

Prior to the Council of Nicaea there was no other doctrine of the church other than the local visible congregation used in the institutional and concrete sense. If the New Testament congregations had believed in a universal invisible body of Christ theory it would have been taught and used in the next three hundred years after the apostolic period. However, it is simply not found.

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Significantly, the joint council of Donatist Bishops and Augustinian bishops were over 800 and were from all parts of the Roman Empire.

After the council of Nicaea and before the Reformation there is no recorded history of any group believing in a universal body of Christ consisting of all true Christians in all denominations.

Those called “Anabaptists” by their Catholic enemies, but preferred to call themselves simply “Baptists”⁴ have a continued history between the Apostolic period and the Reformation. They believed only in a local visible congregational body of Christ. They referred to it in the institutional and concrete sense. They denied that Roman Catholics were part of that congregation of Christ. They spoke of a yet future congregation assembled in heaven after the judgment consisting of all the saved. However, they did not believe that assembly presently existed nor did it contain members of the Roman Catholic churches now or in the future.

When the Reformation failed to reform the Roman Catholic Church and the Church excommunicated the Reformers, they were faced with the dilemma that they were now excommunicated outside the only kind of church they had embraced and believed. How could they justify their existence outside what they had admitted to be the true church which they were only trying to reform? How could they justify starting new denominations? They revisited Augustine’s basis for justifying a “universal visible”

⁴ The Mennonite church historian Roland H. Bainton says of the Reformation Anabaptists, “*To call these people Anabaptist, that is rebaptizers, was to malign them, because they denied that baptism was repeated, inasmuch as infant baptism was no baptism at all. They called themselves simply Baptists, not, re-Baptists*” – Rolland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1952, p. 99

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church in the parable of the tares where he substituted the term “*church*” for the “*field*” (which Christ did not call the church but the “*world*”). The reformers simply made the church synonymous with the “*kingdom*” in this parable which they argued was invisible. Hence, they simply changed one word (“visible”) to Augustine’s definition making it a “universal *invisible*” church. Now, they had the justification to exist outside what they had formerly regarded as the “true” church and the justification to start new denominations.

Interestingly, the Reformation Anabaptists charged Luther and Calvin with the very same charge leveled against Augustine by the Donatists when he came up with the idea of a “universal visible church.” The Donatists charged him with inventing another kind of church. Neander says,

*In this way they furnished the occasion to the Donatists of charging them with supposing the existence of **two churches**; but they were extremely uneasy under this accusation, and would allow of no other distinction than that of two different condition of one and the same church, inasmuch as it was a present a mortal church, but would hereafter be an immortal one. – Ibid., p. 247*

Both the universal visible church theory and the universal invisible church theory were developed in order to escape church discipline from the church wherein their membership resided and/or disfellowship by other churches. Christ and the apostles had developed the doctrine of church discipline in order to condemn and separate from any “brother” who departed from the apostolic faith and practice (2 Thes. 3:6). However, both universal concepts of the church were developed to avoid church discipline administered toward those who departed from the faith and practice of their former church.

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Both of these universal church doctrines invalidate church discipline and destroy the very thing that was to protect and preserve, New Testament faith and practices and stigmatize and condemn those who departed from the faith. Instead, these two new church doctrines justify doctrines and practices contrary to the faith by establishing the heretics as equal members with the faithful in what they define as the “true” church.

Most universal church advocates try to harmonize “*one body*” with their two different kinds of church bodies (visible and invisible) by saying the local congregational body is merely the visible manifestation of the invisible and that the visible should strive to be in more conformity with the invisible. That is why Reformed Baptists like John MacArthur, John Piper and Alistair Begg all repudiate water baptism as the necessary prerequisite for membership in their congregational bodies. Their stated reason for rejecting water baptism as a prerequisite for membership in their local body is that the “true” church includes sprinkled, poured, immersed or non-baptized members.

When I weigh the kind of imperfection involved in tolerating an invalid baptism because some of our members are deeply persuaded that it is biblically valid, over against the kind of imperfection involved in saying to a son or daughter of the living God, “You are excluded from the local church,” my biblical sense is that the latter is more unthinkable than the former. The local church is a visible expression of the invisible, universal, body of Christ. To exclude from it is virtually the same as excommunication. And no serious church takes excommunication as an invitation to attend the church down the street..... Therefore, since there is good evidence that you are members of the Body of Christ, you may be members of this local expression of that body. -

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John Piper, **Response to Grudem on Baptism and Church Membership**, August 9, 2007

None of these Reformed Baptists deny that immersion of the believer preceded membership in New Testament congregations or was part of the apostolic doctrine. However, because they believe the local congregational body is merely a local expression of the “true” body of Christ, they are forced by that false doctrine to other false doctrines (“*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*”) and so in order to be consistent with their “true” church theory, they must accept unimmersed professors into their visible congregation.

It should be asked why would Christ and the apostles command the churches to remove from their membership a “*brother*” who walks contrary to, or apostatizes from the apostolic faith and practice (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thes. 3:6) if the same brother has equal standing in the “true” church? Why would they demand immersion in water to be received into their congregation if the “true” church does not??

The truth is that the doctrine of the universal visible or invisible church promotes division, false doctrine, apostasy and confusion as the norm within the membership of what they call the “true” church.

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CHAPTER FIVE

How Do Landmark Baptists View Secular Church History?

There can be no debate that New Testament churches were fully functioning long before Luke penned the final pages of the book of Acts. There are no accounts of any other denominational kind of churches. All churches found in the pages of the New Testament were of like faith and order.

However, when one picks up a modern secular book on “church history” there is nothing found in such books for at least fifteen hundred years after the close of the apostolic era that even comes close to resembling those churches found in the pages of the New Testament.⁵ During that period, the only kind of church that stands out on the pages of secular church history is the Roman Catholic Church and those whom Rome persecuted and depicted as heretics.

Even though there is a radical and profound difference in theology between modern Rome and the epistle written to the New Testament church at Rome, the vast majority of secular and religious historians assume they are one and the same.

Even prominent protestant leaders such as Dr. John MacArthur and Dr. R.C. Sproul when they speak of the Roman Catholic Church during the period of the Dark Ages, call it “**The Church.**” The current host of the syndicated radio program The Bible Answer Man, Hank Hannegraff, as well as its former host Dr. Walter Martin, espouses the idea that the Roman Catholic Church

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is the true apostolic church until the Reformation period, and even now continues to be “a” true church of Christ in error.

However, what evidence supports this assumption? From what sources can this assumption be supported? It is common knowledge that the writing and preservation of ecclesiastical records up to the Reformation period have been solely in the hands of Rome.⁶ She has determined what should be preserved and what should be destroyed. She has defined what orthodoxy is and what heresy is and who are to be regarded as “heretics.”⁷

The question must be asked, how credible is her testimony and how accurate are her definitions? How accurate are her records?

⁶ “The original sources of our information are, almost exclusively, the Catholic writers – a race of men who, while they had an interest in disguising the truth, appear to have delighted themselves in culminating all that dissented themselves from their communion. And even since the Reformation....our Protestant historians have been but too implicitly led by those false guides. There is scarcely any history of the Christian Church extant in our language from which it would not be easy to exemplify the truth of this representation...But with any man with his eyes open, and capable of exercising two grains of discrimination, should have first of all permitted himself to be so far imposed upon by the Catholic writers, as to give credit to such a tissue of absurd and ridiculous fooleries, and then gravely to detail them to his readers for the truth of history, is at once a striking weakness of the author, and of the necessity of exercising continual vigilance on the part of the reader, if he would neither become the dupe of Papal slander, nor of Protestant credulity.” William Jones, *The History of the Christian Church*. (Louisville: Norwood & Palmer, 1831) Vol. I, preface.

⁷ “Church councils often have been manipulated and ecclesiastical tradition has been falsified to give credence to some teaching entirely unknown to the New Testament.” Robert A. Baker, **The Baptist March in History** (Nashville: Convention Press, 1958) p. 2

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Not all scholars completely trust her definition of orthodoxy or the reliability of her records. There have been many historians from many denominations, including some candid Roman Catholic historians that view the data preserved by Rome in a completely different light.⁸ Many of them realize that unlike the Scriptures, secular history is; (1) uninspired, thus subject to personal bias;⁹ (2) incomplete; and (3) often inaccurate.¹⁰ These historians believe that Rome has unintentionally preserved sufficient historical data to demonstrate that apostolic Christianity continued among those

⁸ “The Catholics....instead of assuming such honorable pride, the orthodox theologians were tempted, by the assurance of impunity to compose fictions, which must be stigmatized with epithets of fraud and forgery. They ascribed their own polemical works to the most venerable names of Christian antiquity; the characters of Athanasius and Augustin were awkwardly personated by Vigilius and his disciples....Even the Scriptures themselves were profaned by their rash hands...the example of fraud must cite suspicion.” Edward Gibbons, **The Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire**. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier. 1845) Vol. 3, pp. 555,556,557

⁹ “No men are less to be trusted then the monkish historians, when they speak of he character and doctrine of dissidents from Rome.” Benjamin Evans. **The Early English Baptists**, (Greenwood: The Attic Press, Reprint 1977) Vol. 1, p. 13

¹⁰ “....no impartial reader can, I think, investigate the innumerable grotesque and lying legends that, during the whole course of the Middle Ages, were deliberately palmed upon mankind as undoubted facts, can follow the histories of the false decretals, and the discussions that were connected with them, or can observe the complete and absolute incapacity most Catholic historians have displayed, of conceiving any good thing in the ranks of their opponents, or stating with common fairness any consideration that can tell against their cause, without acknowledging how serious and how inveterate has been the evil. There have been, no doubt many noble exceptions. Yet, it is, I believe difficult to exaggerate the extent to which this moral defect exists in most of the ancient and very much of the modern literature of Catholicism.” William E. H. Lecky, **History of European Morals**. 2 Vols. (New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1887) Vol. 2, p. 212

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whom she labeled and treated as **heretics**. Indeed, some identify those “heretics” as apostolic Christianity who are prophetically predicted to be characterized as “*heretics*” between His first and Second Advent.

Is it a fair question to ask if the Bible predicts that apostate Christianity would characterize the apostolic true churches of Christ as “*heretics*”? Does the Bible predict that apostate Christianity would distort and persecute apostolic churches until He comes again? If it does, all one has to do is compare these predictive scriptures with the character of all churches found in secular church history to see which, if any, are the Lord’s true apostolic churches.

The Bible clearly predicts an apostate Christianity will arise in direct contrast to the characteristics of true apostolic New Testament Churches. In essence, the Bible warns us where we ought not to look for the Lord’s true churches between the close of the Apostolic Age and the Second Coming of Christ.

A. Don’t look among Churches who persecute

*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, **that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.** And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. - Jn. 16:1-3 (emphasis mine)*

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:

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and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. - Rev. 17:6

These are predictive prophecies concerning the future of the Lord's churches and their persecutors. Significantly, Jesus predicts that those who persecute the Lord's churches during that period, after the close of the Biblical era, will believe they are serving the one true God, in killing them.

...that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. – Jn.16:2 (emphasis mine)

At the very minimum, this is clearly a Biblical prophecy that should warn us not to look for the true churches of Christ among those who persecute professed people of God in the name of God.

It does not take much study of secular church history to realize that the Roman Catholic Church perfectly characterizes this kind of persecuting Christianity. It does not take much study of the Reformation period right up until the declaration of Independence in America, to realize that both Roman and Reformed Catholicism (Protestantism) killed, and persecuted one another. In addition, both at times, joined forces and persecuted professed Christians, who were neither part of them, or took part in such acts of persecution.

Where then do you look for His true churches? You don't look among those known for their persecution of other professed Christians. You look among those whom Rome and Reformed Rome martyred and persecuted, as "heretics." This is the inspired predicted plight of the true churches of Christ during this time of apostasy. Their history is traced by the trail of blood of their martyrs.

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B. Don't look among State Churches

*And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: **With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 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. - Rev. 17:1-5 (emphasis mine)*

Many attempt to interpret this prophetic woman as merely secular and political Rome, but that is contextually impossible. In Revelation 17:1-5, the symbolic descriptions are stated, whereas in Revelation 17:6-18, the symbolic descriptions are explained. In both the symbolic description and explanation she is clearly distinguished from secular government and kings:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. – Rev. 17:2

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And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast... and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. – Rev. 17:12, 17

The description “beast” is a common symbol for gentile governments. In Daniel such beasts are characteristic of secular governments and their rulers (Dan. 7). Her relationship to this beast is two-fold.

1. She sits upon it – Symbolism of being supported by the beast.
2. She commits fornication with the kings of the earth – Symbolism of illicit union – marriage of state and religion – state religion

Furthermore, she is a symbolic woman identified as “*Mystery Babylon.*” The term “mystery” when attached to “*Babylon*” commonly referred to the paganized religions that originated from Babel. Babel was the first organized institutionalized religious rebellion against God. Nimrod took the truth of God written in the heavens, and transformed it into astrology, and perverted the nature of the Creator into that of the creature, making himself a god man. When God confused, and scattered the citizens of Babel, this “*mystery*” religion was scattered throughout the world. She is state institutionalized false religion.

She has been the state religion of every gentile government that has risen previous to Rome (Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Medes and Persians, Greece). This harlot has controlled, and manipulated every one of these former gentile governments in order to persecute, and kill the people of God. Hence, John could say, she

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was responsible not only for the death of all the prophets and the saints “upon the earth,” but responsible for deceiving all the nations:

*for by thy sorceries were **all nations** deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. –*
Rev. 18:23-24 (emphasis mine)

The Babylonian mystery religion had its seat of power in the city of Rome at the time John wrote this vision (Rev. 17:18). She was epitomized in Caesar, who was worshipped as a god man. John was on the island of Patmos, because he refused to offer up incense, dedicated to this deity of Rome.

However, John’s message is concerning the future of this harlot. She will be destroyed by ten kings, who had not come to power when John wrote this, nor will they come to power, until just previous to the second coming of Christ.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast... and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. – Rev. 17:12, 17

She is not destroyed, until the time of these ten kings after they receive a kingdom. They destroy her, when they come to power “with the beast” for “one hour,” when He attempts to fight Christ at the Second Advent.

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they

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that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. – Rev. 17:13-14

Rome, as a secular government was overthrown in AD 476, and since that time has been the Vatican State. Therefore, the only government existing in Rome both before, and at the time of Second Advent, when these ten future kings unite with the beast to fight Christ, is the Vatican Roman Catholic Church State.

John is predicting the future of this Harlot in connection with the churches of God. Notice the direct contrast between this woman in Revelation 17-18, and another woman in Revelation 18 and 21! The first, is described as a metaphorical impure, and unfaithful woman (Rev. 17:5 harlot, whore), while the second, is described as a metaphorically pure and faithful woman (Rev 19:6-7 bride). The first has its seat of authority in an earthly worldly city (Rev. 17:18), whereas the second has her seat of authority in the heavenly city (Rev. 21). The contrast is too clear to miss. This is the ultimate contrast between polluted and pure institutionalized religion, right up to the second advent of Christ.

This Babylonian mystery cult had captivated, and permeated the whole Roman Empire, long before Constantine the Great came to power in the fourth century. Long before Constantine came to power, there were many churches that took in massive amounts of members, still clinging to the traditions, and beliefs of this Great Harlot. Slowly, multitudes of churches were permeated, and leavened into an apostate condition by this harlot.

During the time of Constantine the Great, the Roman Empire was beginning to crumble. Constantine rejected the apostolic churches that would have nothing to do with those paganized churches, or with any institutionalized state religion. Constantine embraced the apostate Augustine, and the paganized churches, that

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sided with him, to form the new state church religion. Constantine hoped this merger would prevent the collapse of the Roman Empire.

Dear reader, take note that the origin of a state church, is not to be found in the New Testament, but with paganized Christianity, three hundred years after the writing of the New Testament. Here is the beginning of an institutionalized Christian State religion. The apostate Augustine formulated the theological foundations (The City of God) to support this Christianized, Babylonian state religion. In declaring it the new state religion, all citizens in the Roman Empire were to become part of this Christianized Babylonian state religion, just as, they had done with the previous pagan, Babylonian state religion. The very character of the religious order adopted by Roman Catholicism comes directly from Mystery Babylon:

The College of Cardinals, with the Pope at its head, is just the counterpart of the Pagan College of Pontiffs, with its 'Pontifex Maximus,' or 'Sovereign Pontiff,' which had existed in Rome from the earliest times, and which is known to have been framed on the model of the grand original Council of Pontiffs at Babylon. – Alexander Hislop, **The Two Babylons or The Papal Worship.** Loizeaux Brothers, New Jersey, 1959, p. 206

In the Mystery Babylon religion, can be found **Pontiff's, monks, priests, and Cardinals**, but no such offices are to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Roman Catholicism would continue to adopt and develop the doctrines, and practices of Mystery Babylon, under Christianized names for the next one thousand years.

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This Great Whore would produce a brood of offspring, Christianized “*harlots*,” all of which would also be state churches. All of them would continue to practice Christianized Babylonian doctrines (infant baptism, sacraments, etc.).

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: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. - Rev. 17:5

Some of these “harlots” state churches are:

1. Lutheranism - The Church of Germany
2. Presbyterianism - The Church of Scotland;
The Church of Switzerland
3. Episcopalian - The Church of England
4. The Reformed Church - The Church of
Holland

We are not to look for apostolic Christianity among any kind of state church, or religion. Such, is an unholy union (harlotry – “*fornication with the kings of the earth*”). This Biblical prophecy rules out Rome, and her Reformation daughters, as possible candidates to be New Testament churches. Where are we to look then? We are to look among those condemned for refusing to join this unholy union between church and state. Those identified by state churches, as “heretics.”

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A. Don't look among those churches which embrace predicted apostate doctrines:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. - 1 Tim. 4:1-5

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. - Gal. 1:8-9

Roman Catholicism is well known for prohibiting its priests and nuns to marry. Seventh Day Adventism, and other apostate Christian cults, also are well known concerning their dietary laws. There are multitudes of new denominations that distort, and thus deny the gospel of grace, and teach justification by works.

There are other equally clear scriptural warnings about those who would distort the true nature of God (John 1:1; 1 Jn. 4:1-4; 2 Jn. 9-11; Mt. 28:19). Among those who fall under this category are the United Pentecostal Churches, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Church of Latter Day Saints, and scores more.

What the apostate church called truth and orthodoxy, the Bible and apostolic Christianity calls heresy. What Roman and Reformed Catholicism condemned as heretics, the New Testament defined as

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the churches of Christ “*contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.*”

During the period of secular church history (the period of great apostasy), we are explicitly warned not to look for the churches of Christ among those who hold to such explicitly condemned heresies. We are to look for the true churches among those who opposed these heresies and as a consequence were labeled “heretics” by the ruling state churches.

B. Don’t look among those who perverted and distorted the beliefs of others:

It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? – Mt. 10:25

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! - Lk. 7:33

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. – Lk. 6:22

Apostate Christianity at a very early date invented a slanderous term to label the true apostolic churches. They called the churches of God, **Anabaptists**. The term means to **rebaptize**. New Testament churches refused to recognize the ordinances of apostate

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churches, as scriptural, and therefore, would properly baptize those coming over from the apostate churches. New Testament churches denied they rebaptized anyone, but rather claimed that the apostates were never truly baptized.. Rome, early on, instituted state enforced ecclesiastical laws against “Anabaptism,” punishable by death. These laws were called the Codex Justinianus after their founder.

The fabrications, and slanders brought against the apostolic Anabaptists by Rome, and her Reformed daughters, are legion.¹¹ When apostolic Christianity used the Bible as their defense, the inquisitors used Catholic tradition, to repudiate their orthodox beliefs, labeling them “*heretics*” instead.¹²

Rome accused the ancient apostolic Anabaptist Paulicians for embracing the heresy of Manicheism even though the Paulicians

¹¹ “...The writers of that age searched out the most degrading and insulting epithets that language afforded and applied them with malignant gratification.....Yet these men could appeal to those who witnessed their sufferings, and boldly declare, with the axe or the stake in view, none venturing to contradict, that they were not put to death for any evil deeds, but solely for the sake of the Gospel.” J.M. Cramp, **Baptist History**. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication) p. 155

¹² “...two heresies penalized by death in the Codex Justinianus were a denial of the trinity and a repetition of baptism. This ancient legislation directed against the Arians and Donatists was revived in the Sixteenth Century and applied to Anti-Trinitarians and Anabaptists. Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin all appealed to the imperial law...In fact, the very name ‘Anabaptist,’ meaning ‘Rebaptism,’ was invented in order to subject to imperial law those who preferred to call themselves simply Baptists. They would never admit they baptized over again, for infant baptism was to them no baptism but rather a ‘dipping in the Roman bath.’” Roland H. Bainton, **The Travail of Religious Liberty** (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958) pp. 98-99

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openly denied it and openly condemned Manicheism as heresy themselves.¹³ The ancient Anabaptists were accused of denying marriage, denying the Lord's Day, denying observances of the ordinances, denying Christ, etc. simply because they denied the Roman Catholic version of these things.¹⁴ The radical pedobaptists (baby baptizers) led by Thomas Munzer in Germany were labeled as Anabaptists by the Lutheran State Church in order to exterminate all evangelical Anabaptists by the thousands even though Munsterites were pedobaptists and not Anabaptists. Anabaptists condemned the Munsterites as heretics and denied such were ever part of the true Anabaptist movement, but that mattered little to the Lutheran or Roman Catholic state churches.

¹³ "The Paulicians sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the Manichean sect, and complained of the injustice which impressed that invidious name on the simple votaries of St. Paul and of Christ." Edward Gibbons, **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire**. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1845) Vol. 5, p. 387

¹⁴ William Jones says of the Waldenese, "The names imposed on them in France by their adversaries, they say, have been intended to vilify and ridicule them, or to represent them as new and different sects. Being stripped of all their property and reduced by persecution to extreme poverty, they have been called 'poor of Lyons.' From their mean and famished appearance in their exalted and destitute state, they have been called, in provincial jargon, 'Siccan,' or pickpockets. Because they would not observe Saints day, they were falsely supposed to neglect the Sabbath also, and called 'Inzabbatati' or 'InSabbathists.' As they denied transubstantiation or the personal and divine presence of Jesus Christ in the host or wafer exhibited in the mass, they were called 'Arians.' Their adversaries, premising that all power must be derived from God through his vicegerent, the Pope, or from an opposite and evil principle, inferred that the Waldenses were 'Manicheans' because they denied the Popes supremacy over the emperor and kings of the earth." William Jones, **The History of the Christian Church**, (Norwood & Plamer, Louisville: 1831) p. 300

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It is this kind of distortion, false accusations by the ruling State Churches that defined the Anabaptists as “heretics” and led modern historians to view them through the eyes of their enemies instead of the truth.¹⁵

We are not to look for the Lord’s churches among those who slandered, distorted and falsely accused others. Where are we to look then? We are to look for the Lord’s true churches among those who are slandered as the “*heretics*” by such state churches.

G. Don’t Look Among the so-called Church Fathers

Few if any evangelical scholars recognize The Nicene Church Fathers and The Post-Nicene Church Fathers as true representatives of New Testament Christianity. Why? Because they are so radically different from New Testament churches and so obviously like modern Roman Catholicism. Rather, they rightly see these preserved documents to accurately reflect the doctrinal evolution of Roman Catholicism.¹⁶ However, most cannot see that

¹⁵ “Because of this malignant prejudice, the historians of the day dismissed these groups without attempting to gain a documentary understanding or an objective judgment. This prejudging and condemnation of the free church movement has been carried on even in later times, a truth illustrated by subsequent Protestant historical accounts of the Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation. Only in recent years has a serious research attempt been made among historians to reconstruct a true picture of the Anabaptist movement.” Earl D. Rachmacher, **What the Church Is All About** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978) p. 67

¹⁶ ¹⁶ George Salmon says concerning the so-called Church Fathers, “*And then, when we search for Apostolic traditions in the writings of the Father’s, there is nothing to mark their Apostolic origin. We have no certain means, by our own ingenuity of distinguishing truth from false traditions, not one of the Father is recognized as singly a trustworthy guide, every one of them is admitted to have*

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The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers are but the logical historical foundations for the Nicene and Post-Nicene. The Ante-Nicene Fathers records the beginning of apostasy that gradually developed into the Nicene and Post-Nicene Pagan Christianity. In The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers we find the origin of explicit errors of baptismal regeneration, and the gradual development of infant immersion, and various orders of ecclesiastical offices that are found explicitly in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers but not in the scriptures.

The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers are the history of apostasy at its very root, which laid the foundation for the Nicene and Post-Nicene development. Rome destroyed the historical and doctrinal records of all other professing Christians during this period (Montanists, Novationists, Donatists) by the power of the secular sword except for those Nicene records! Why? Those Nicene (ante, post) records are the historical roots of what gradually developed into the Nicene and Post-Nicene Roman Catholic denomination. These are writings record the historical succession of apostasy.

held some views which cannot be safely followed.” – Infallibility of the Church, George Salmon; pp. 131. The so-called Church Father’s have been selectively preserved to defend their own history – a history of apostasy.

Fredrick W. Farrar in his **History of Interpretation** said of the so-called “Church Fathers” – *“There are but few of them whose pages are not rife with errors – errors of method, errors of fact, errors of history, of grammar, and even of doctrine. This is the language of simple truth, not of slighting disparagement. I should be most unwilling to speak with disrespect of the Fathers of the Church. They, like ourselves were children of their age...remember that the Fathers had been thrust into a position of autocracy which they repeatedly and emphatically disclaim, and which they ever claimed it would have been completely nullified by their own writings.”* – pp. 162-164

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What is the value of the Ante-Nicene Fathers? When compared to the Post-Nicene Fathers it reveals clearly how far the Post-Nicene Fathers have departed from what they used to believe and practice. Some of the earliest Ante-Nicene fathers provide some insights into early Christianity. However, as one progresses in the Ante-Nicene Fathers, so does the progression of error until it becomes full bloom in the Post-Nicene condition of Rome. However, don't look for the true churches of Christ among the Ant-Nicene Church Fathers. Rome preserved these records while choosing not to preserve other records because these records serve Rome's claim to historical succession while helping Rome to disclaim all others as heretics or new comers.

G. The True History of New Testament Christianity after the Apostolic Era:

If the Roman Catholic Church is not the true representative of New Testament Christianity, then, who is? We do find them distorted but preserved in the pages of Rome's persecuting history. They are routinely identified by Roman historians as the evangelical Anabaptists. They are recorded by their trail of blood shed by Rome. Paul said, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

Several factors are routinely overlooked by pro-Romanists when studying what Rome recorded about those she called "*heretics*." False religious groups lived in the same geographical areas where true churches of Christ were also located simply because there was religious freedom and safety among New Testament Churches as they were all objects of state church persecution. Consequently due to geographical and social association, the true churches of Christ were labeled by the names

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of those heretical groups. Another factor often overlooked is that Roman historians isolate a particular heretic and then label apostolic churches by the name of that heretic simply because there are resemblances between the two. For example, New Testament Churches believed that a true child of God possessed a new and old nature simultaneously (Gal. 5:16-19) and therefore since Manicheans also believed in two opposing forces Rome labeled the Anabaptists as Manicheans. For example, New Testament Churches believed that the membership of a church ought to be solely composed of spiritual persons who live a holy life and since individuals like Donatus and Montanus believed similarly, these churches were labeled Montanists and Donatists and ascribed every excess that these individuals embraced. Rome played this game consistently throughout its recorded histories.

However, at times, Roman persecutors preserved what these Anabaptists actually believed because their faith was so obviously contrast to that of Rome's and so clearly subjected them to the ecclesiastical laws established by Rome. Such glimmers of light revealed that true apostolic Christianity was still alive and thriving in spite of the horrid and bloody persecution by Rome.

These evangelical Christians, many of whom, even the Roman persecutors admitted, lived pure and godly lives; are painted for the most part, in the worst of terms, in regard to their doctrines, simply due to the word of their enemies, or invalid associations. They were generally called "Anabaptists" by Rome but were perverted and distorted under such epithets as Montanists, Novations, Donatists, Paulicians, Henricans, Catharists, and Waldenses. However, they preferred to call themselves simply "Baptists." Here are the groups where you look for the churches of Christ during the predicted age of apostasy under state controlled churches.

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Unfortunately, the vast majority of Church historians still accept history as recorded and viewed by Rome. However, there are many non-Baptist historians that acknowledged the antiquity of the Baptists:

1. **Sir Isaac Newton** - the greatest scientist who ever lived says:

The Modern Baptist, formerly called Anabaptists, are the only people who have never symbolized with the Papacy – William Whiston, **Memoirs of Whiston**, quoted in W.A. Jarrell's **Baptist Church Perpetuity**. (Dallas, 1894), [reprinted by Calvary Baptist Book Store, Ashland, KY] p. 313

2. **John Clark Ridpath**, Methodist, author of the monumental work "Ridpath's History of the World" says,

I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as 100 AD, though without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists.- John Clark Ridpath, personal letter to W.A. Jarrell, quoted in W.A. Jarrell's **Baptist Church Perpetuity** (Dallas, 1894), [reprinted by Calvary Baptist Church Book Store, Ashland, K.Y.], p. 59

3. **The King of Holland** appointed Dr. J.J. Dermout and Dr. Ypiej of the Reformed Church to write a history of Christianity and they say of the Baptists:

We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times

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Mennonites were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all ages... Ypeij en Dermout, Gerschiedenis Der nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk. (Breda 1819) quoted by J.T. Christian in **A History of the Baptists** (Texarkana, AR; Bogard Press, 1922) vol. 1, pp. 95-96

4. Mosheim, Lutheran Historian says,

*Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost all the countries of Europe persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists – Johann Laurenze von Mosheim, **An Ecclesiastical History**, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1860), [Reprinted by Old Paths Book Club, Box V, Rosemead, CA., Second ed.], Vol. II pp. 119,120*

5. Cardinal Hosius, Roman Catholic, Ambassador of Pope to the Council of Trent says in the year 1563 AD

For not so long ago I read the edict of the other prince who lamented the fate of the Anabaptists who, so we read, were pronounced heretics twelve hundred years ago and deserving of capital punishment. He wanted them to be heard and not taken as condemned without a hearing. (by Carolinne White, Ph.D, Oxford University, Head of

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Oxford Latin) - **Tracing the Cardinal Hosius
“Baptist” Quote** By Ben Townsend¹⁷

Hosius dated the Anabaptists to at least 363 A.D.

6. **Zwingli, Swiss Reformer**, writing in 1525 says of the Anabaptists:

The institution of the Anabaptists is no novelty, but for THIRTEEN HUNDRED YEARS has caused great trouble to the church. – **Christian**, op cit. p. 86

Reformers Date Baptists back to 225 AD

7. **Alexander Campbell**, founder of the Disciples of Christ says of the Baptists;

From the Apostolic Age to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced. – Alexander Campbell, A Debate on Christian Baptism, Between the Rev. W.L. Maccalla, A Presbyterian teacher, and Alexander Campbell, (“Buffalo,” NY., Campbell and Sala, 1824) pp. 378, 379

¹⁷ *Nam & alterius Principis edictum non ita pridem legi, qui vicem Anabaptistarum dolens, quos ante mille ducentos annes haeretis, capitalique supplicio dignos esse pronunciatos legimus, vult, ut audiantur omnino, nec indicta causa pro condemnatis habeantur.* (The letters of Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius, Liber Epistolarum 150, titled "Alberto Bavariae Duci" in about 1563 A.D.)

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8. Robert Barclay, a Quaker says,

There are also reasons for believing that on the continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the time of the Apostles – Robert Barclay, **The Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth**. (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1876), pp. 11, 12

9. Roland Bainton, a Mennonite, author of “The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century” says of the Anabaptists:

To call these people Anabaptists, that is re-baptizers, was to malign them, because they denied that baptism was repeated, inasmuch as infant baptism is no baptism at all. They called themselves simply Baptists.– Rolland Bainton, **The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century**, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1956), p. 99

Nearly all early Baptist historians unanimously testify to the historicity and perpetuity of the New Testament churches. However, many (but not all) modern Baptist historians approach historical sources through the eyes of Reformed Catholic Rome (Protestantism).¹⁸

¹⁸ Dr. Robert Ashcraft points out that German Rationalism entered the halls of academia among Baptists in the late 1800's at Louisville Southern Baptist Seminary under the guise of the “**new historical critical method**.” This method when applied to textual criticism of the Scriptures resulted in denial of Biblical inspiration and promoted evolution. When applied to church history along with a theological bias of universalism supported the view of Reformed Romanism. - Robert Ashcraft, **Contending For the Faith**. (Baptist Sunday School Committee, Texarkana, TX. 2006) pp. 601-606

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When the Reformation occurred, the Protestants joined with the Catholics in persecuting these Anabaptists. Even in America up to the introduction of the bill of rights, Protestants publicly persecuted these Anabaptists. The “**Ana**” was dropped and they became known merely as “**Baptists**.” Historical Baptists¹⁹ have always rebaptized all who came over from the ranks of Protestants and Catholics simply because baptism was the designated act to publicly identify a believer with the Baptist ministry (not a Catholic or Protestant ministry).

The Protestant Reformer Henry Bullinger confirms the fact that these apostolic churches rejected both Protestant and Catholic churches and their ordinances when he says of them:

*The Anabaptists think themselves to the only true church of Christ, and acceptable to God; and teach that they, who by baptism are received into their churches, ought not to have communion [fellowship] with [those called] evangelical, or any other whatsoever: for that our-[i.e., evangelical Protestant, or reformed] churches are not true churches, any more than the churches of the Papists.” - J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism What Is It?** (reprint by Calvary Baptist Church Book Shop, Ashland, KY) p. 115*

Significantly, since the time that a denominational difference occurred among apostolic churches, the name **Baptist** has always been attached to those churches which continued the ministry of

¹⁹ Today the term “Baptist” is generic and includes more churches than the true historic and Biblical Baptists. Historic Baptists are known by their doctrinal content rather than their label. Historic Baptists are specifically known by their identity with all five aspects of the great commission.

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John (Ana-baptists, Cata-Baptists, etc.). Today, the name **Baptist** has become a generic tag worn by many conflicting denominations which do not share either the doctrinal or historical heritage of these churches. However, it is not the name tag that defines New Testament Churches but their apostolic faith and practice as well as historical heritage that reaches back to the first church in Jerusalem.

G. The Great Commission Essentials and Historic Baptists:

*And so in regard to this commission of Christ, it was addressed, to somebody. It supposes that there will be somebody to be baptized, and it authorizes somebody to baptize them. If by commanding some to baptize, it commands others by implication to be baptized, it by the same implication commands them to be baptized by those, and only those whom it commands to baptize. - William M. Nevins, **Alien Baptism and the Baptists**, The Challenge Press, Little Rock, Ark., 1977, p. 156.*

*We cannot, for one moment conceive that Christ or His apostles committed the gospel to and commissioned it to be preserved and preached by, those who neither experientially understood, nor had themselves obeyed it, and whose teaching and practice tended directly to pervert and subvert it. - J.R. Graves, **Old Landmarkism, What Is It?** 1880, p. 35*

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To say this commission was left to any believer, or to some group of men who hold every heresy under the sun, is to accuse the Lord of great carelessness.
– Milburn Cockrell, **Scriptural Church Organization**, 2nd Ed. p. 29.

In this simple analysis of the commission is presented the very process by which Baptists are now made, constituted into churches, and governed. That it was the process by which the first preachers made converts, and constituted churches, is beyond question. T. G. Jones, **The Baptists, their Origin, Continuity, Principles, Spirit, Policy, Position, and Influence, a Vindication.** (Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society) p. 27. (emphasis mine)

From these proposition, thus established, we draw the following inferences, as clear and certain truths,

I. That all churches and ministers, who originated since the apostles, and not successively to them, are not in gospel order; and therefore cannot be acknowledged as such.

II. That all, who have been ordained to the work of the ministry without the knowledge and call of the church, by popes, councils, &c. are the creatures of those who constituted them, and not the servants of Christ, or his church, and therefore have no right to administer for them.

III. That those who have set aside the discipline of the gospel, and have given law to, and exercised

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dominion over the church, are usurpers over the place and office of Christ, are against him; and therefore may not be accepted in their offices.

IV. That they, who administer contrary to their own, or the faith of the gospel, cannot administer for God; since without the gospel faith he has nothing to minister; and without their own he accepts no service; therefore the administrations of such are unwarrantable impositions in any way.

Our reasons, therefore for rejecting baptism by immersion when administered by Pedobaptist ministers, are,

I. That they are connected with churches clearly out of the apostolic succession, and therefore clearly out of the apostolic commission

But if it should be said, that the apostolic succession cannot be ascertained, and then it is proper to act without it; we say, that the loss of the succession can never prove it futile, nor justify any one out of it. The Pedobaptists, by their own histories, admit they are not of it; but we do not, and shall think ourselves entitled to the claim, until the reverse be clearly shown. And should any think authority derived from the MOTHER HARLOTS, sufficient to qualify to administer a gospel ordinance, they will be so charitable as not to condemn us for preferring that derived from Christ. And should any still more absurdly plead that ordination, received from an individual, is sufficient; we leave them to shew what is the use of ordination, and why it exists. If any

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think an administration will suffice which has no pattern in the gospel; they will suffer us to act according to the divine order with impunity. And if it should be said that faith in the subject is all that is necessary, we beg leave to require it where the scriptures do, that is every where. But we must close: we beseech you brethren while you hold fast the form of your profession, be ready to unite with those from whom you differ, as far as the principles of eternal truth will justify. And while you firmly oppose that shadowy union, so often urged, be instant in prayer and exert yourselves to bring about that which is in heart, and after godliness. Which the Lord hasten in its season. Amen and Amen. - A. M. MARSHALL, Moderator. JESSE MERCER, Clerk. – Jesse Mercer, **History of the Georgia Baptist Association**, 1838, pp. 126-127. (emphasis mine)

Conclusion: Some object, “these groups commonly called *Anabaptists* do not believe what Baptists believe today and so how can you claim they are Baptists?” We reply, whose word are you basing that conclusion upon? The word of Rome! What does the Bible predict that Rome would do and say about the true churches of Christ? Why then are you surprised by what they say and why do you accept it? The New Testament anticipates and predicts that secular history will pervert the true churches and that is exactly why Baptists can take this position, because it is a Biblical position in regard to secular Church history. Therefore, according to the New Testament prophecy, apostolic Christianity will not be found among any type of Christianity:

1. That persecutes, slanders, and kills other professing Christians.

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2. Among state church types of Christianity.
3. Among those who embrace explicitly predicted false doctrines condemned by the New Testament.

Hence, in reverse the New Testament predicts that apostolic Christianity will be found

1. Among those persecuted, slandered and killed by a professed Christianity.
2. Among those who oppose state churches.
3. Among those who oppose explicit heresies predicted by the New Testament.

Only the historical Evangelical Anabaptists fit these predictive prophecies concerning the future of the New Testament churches after the apostolic age. These prophecies should be the guide for every Christian historian looking for traces of apostolic Christianity.

Every historian should remember that secular history is (1) uninspired, (2) incomplete, and often (3) inaccurate; but the Bible is inspired, complete, and always accurate. When secular history is used to either undermine what the Bible clearly predicts, or to reinterpret the Bible to fit secular history, the consequence will always be false ecclesiastical history and false doctrine.

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CHAPTER SIX

Enemies of the Truth

Paul said that we do not war against flesh and blood, but that does not mean flesh and blood do not war against us in God's kingdom, in God's congregations and in your own family.

There are many professing people of God who are lost professors and there are those who are saved who are either untaught or deceived who oppose the truth (2 Tim. 2:25). We should not count them as our enemies (2 Thes. 3:14), but nevertheless they may act as enemies against the truths we proclaim by opposing, withdrawing and condemning what New Testament churches teach. They are enemies of the truth.

A. Enemies against truth within God's Kingdom

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: - Acts 24:14

But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. - Acts 28:22

B. Enemies against truth within God's Congregations

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. - Acts 20:30

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But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. – 2 Pet. 2:1-2

C. Enemies against truth within Our family

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. – Mt. 10:36

Nothing causes more sorrow than to experience apostasy by one's spouse or children. We must remember, that we are only responsible to share the truth and practice it the best we can. We are not God. We are not sinless. We cannot change hearts or give understanding to others. However, the greatest enemies to what we believe many times come from within our own homes and families. You are not alone. Christ endured the same internal conflict (Mt. 13:54-58).

Many times parents blame themselves when it is simply not their fault. There comes a time in the life of every person where they stand on their own two feet and determine their own views. Sometimes, they make mistakes and go astray in attempting to personalize their own views. After a trial and error experience they may return to their original roots.

Sometimes we have to allow others, especially those we love to make their own decisions, right or wrong and live with those consequences. The bottom line is that every tub sits on its own bottom. We are only responsible for our own beliefs and practices.

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However, it is also the possibility that such opposition and rejection of the truth indicates false profession. This is especially true if that person turns from the gospel of grace and embraces and defends justification inclusive of works (Gal. 1:8-9).

Rejecting the Baptist Pattern in regard to church truth may also be an indicator of a false profession. However, it may equally be an indicator that God has not chosen them to be part of his bride and given them over to deception.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Problems that promote Apostasy

One of the primary problems today is that there are many within the Kingdom, the church and our homes who are lost, but profess to be saved. This is due to many factors.

Many of our children come forward and make a profession because they want to please us, and be accepted by us, and the congregation as a Christian. Other children come forward because they have seen their friends come forward to profess Christ.

Other false professions may be due to the evangelistic practices of the pastor or church at a particular period. If it is conveyed that salvation is primarily saying a particular prayer, walking an isle or making a decision, or other easy believism type ideas, then a church can be full of young and old false professors. However, if what is conveyed to the congregation is that salvation is a change of nature by new birth, that makes you a new creation, giving you a new want to, a change of mind toward sin and a desire to please God, and such things must first be made manifest (Mt. 3:8) before accepting their profession and baptizing them into membership, then there will be a lot less false professions.

However, another reason for members turning against the truth is external influences by those who oppose the truth within their extended family, friends, public educational institutions.

Another problem, especially with our youth is the transition from childhood to adulthood. There is a period of natural rebellion that is common to teenagers trying to establish their own identity, their own beliefs and principles separate from their parents. Many times this is a temporary state until the child has established his own

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convictions separate from his parents. Give the child room to come to their own convictions. Prepare yourself to provide answers when and if they do come to you with objections.

As long as they are young they usually continue passively as part of the group. However, when they begin to come of age and remove themselves out from under the authority of parents, or get married, or move away to go to school and come under the influence of other factors (friends, other family members that oppose the truth; poor choice of Bible colleges, etc.) or if they are lost professors, then moving away from the influence of those who believe the truth allows rebellion against the truth to be more easily manifested or if saved, they may come under the influences that oppose the truth that lead them astray.

Another problem that might promote members going astray or opposing the truth and leaving the congregations of God can be sin which serves as a “*root of bitterness*.” It can be due to sin committed within the congregation or by a congregation that hurts that member or sin committed by that member unknown to the congregation.

Whenever sin is not dealt with properly, it can be used by Satan as a “*root of bitterness*” that might defile many and serve as a stumbling block that Satan can use to drive them from the church and from the truth and lead them to embrace errors.

Open sin in the congregation that causes the congregation to implode and/or is improperly dealt with may also become a stumbling block that turns them against the truth and/or cause them to seek some other denomination, especially if that congregation was the only thing they have previously experienced.

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If a member continues in unconfessed sin, they risk that God may “*give them over*” to their sins which may ultimately lead to apostasy. This is also true with regard to how a member responds to truth revealed to them by God. They must understand that receiving truth is a great blessing that can be withdrawn by God and so it is not to be squandered. If a member either rebels against revealed truth or consistently refuses to obey revealed truth, God may withdraw their ability to understand truth and that may result in their apostasy from the truth:

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. – Mt. 13:11-12

Membership in the Lord’s congregations is a privilege that provides opportunity for greater rewards in heaven as part of the metaphorical bride of Christ. If this privilege is squandered, their name may be erased from the book of the New Jerusalem or the right to live in the city. The majority of the “*saved*” will live outside the New Jerusalem in the new age to come:

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. – Rev. 21:24

In connection with this, there is another problem that promotes apostasy. When our congregations fall into the problems described in the seven congregations of Asia, disintegration from within promotes such apostasy.

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Another problem that promotes apostasy from the Baptist pattern is the inability of parents and/or the leadership of the congregation to answer objections against the truth that have at least the appearance of Biblical credibility. We ought to be sufficiently studied and ready to answer the objections.

One of the chief objections is “*why are our congregations in decline while those who oppose are increasing*”? That objection has been answered by this book.

Another major objection is “*no church knows all the truth, and so what makes our churches any better than others?*” No one needs to know all truth to be a Christian but they must know all truths essential for their salvation. No church needs to know all truth to be a true church, but they must know all truths essential to be a true church. These essential truths are found in the Baptist pattern.

Another major objection is, “*if our kind of church is the only true church in the world, then why is God saving the majority of people in the world without the assistance of our church?*” Salvation is not limited to the church. It is the gospel that God uses to save people and every saved person can be used by God to spread the gospel (Rev.22:17). God uses His family on earth to evangelize the lost. The church is the only authorized institution for proclaiming the gospel, but it is not the only means.

At the close of this book there is provided a resource list where answers for common objections can be found.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Solutions

The solution for dealing with apostasy is to recognize its earliest manifestations and prayerfully deal with it appropriately.

A. Recognize the factors that give Rise to Apostasy

Some of these major factors have been dealt with in the previous chapter. Ask yourself, does this person manifest love for the truth and is driven to please God. Do they manifest the true fruits of a genuine born again person? If not, then their departure will be accompanied by characteristics of a lost person. Members that apostatize from the church with lives that characterize a lost condition should be removed from the membership and be viewed as objects for evangelization.

On the other hand, if their apostasy is characterized by a religious zeal toward that which is contrary to the Baptist Pattern in Scripture, then you should consider the other factors related in the previous chapter as possible causes. For example, consider what internal and external adverse influences that this person may have come under and how long they have been under such influences. Has there been any drastic change in their attendance, attitude or lifestyle. Has there occurred anything within the congregation that might have served as a stumbling block which has not been dealt with properly? Has this person come under the adverse influences of secular education, and/or religious factors in connection with that education? Has this person, due to family, friends or education been under adverse religious influences and/or for the purpose of religious instruction or for fellowship? Is this a

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transition thing, where the child is simply trying to establish his own convictions separate from his parents?

The earlier you perceive that a member is under such adverse influences the better you will be able to hinder the apostasy processes. Their questions in Sunday school, or in family discussions or in discussion with church leaders may provide hints of such adverse influences. Concerned family members, church members and leadership should seek to provide sufficient information and warnings to a member they perceive may be under adverse religious influences.

B. Recognize the Attitude of Apostasy

The attitude that generally characterizes a member who is about to apostatize from the Baptist Pattern and turn to some other pattern of service and worship is usually manifested first by questions that challenge essential beliefs of the congregation. These are not questions in order to gain understanding. Instead, these are what many characterize as “gotcha” questions. They are attack questions designed to oppose and overthrow a particular view point. It is true that many learn best by posing such questions in a genuine spirit of learning. However, the person entertaining or already in apostasy asks these questions in connection with a defiant attitude that is accompanied by a spirit of withdrawal or distance, rather than fellowship.

When such attitudes are perceived by members and its leadership there is a number of things that can be done to help this person and protect other members from adverse influences asserted by such a member. Whatever may be the diagnosis for the cause(s) for this member moving in the direction toward apostasy from the truth,

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and whatever means may be used to recover them, it should be immersed in prayer and done gently:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. – 2 Tim. 2:24-26

For example, a Parent may seek a good supply of sufficient information or literature in order to provide answers if that member is part of their family. Sunday school teachers or Pastors may choose to teach and preach on that subject and deal publicly with the issues (not the member) that surround that false doctrine or practice. They should be careful not to personalize this issue and openly embarrass that member, so that it is perceived as a “personal” attack. Members who are being approached and asked such questions by that member should be able to provide answers. If they cannot, they should seek those answers from the leadership of the congregation to be used on the personal level to respond to their questions.

If they are not capable of dealing with the objections by a fellow member, then it is appropriate to direct that member to the leadership. If that person persists and refuses to seek answers from the leadership of the congregation, then it is appropriate for those members who are being approached by this member to notify the leadership and ask them to accompany them to provide answers to that member.

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C. Recognize the Actions of Apostasy

A person who is entertaining or has already become apostate in attitude will be manifested by a variety of passive and aggressive actions. They will either passively and slowly stop coming to church, while privately attempting to convince and convert family members and close friends to their error, or they will aggressively oppose the truth within their own family, and in the congregation, and/or oppose the leadership of the congregation by posing “gotcha” questions with hope to convert to their viewpoint as many as they can in an attempt to transform the whole congregation or take away from the congregation as many as possible. Remember, truth is not determined by how well a person may be able to argue his position. Apostates usually are very bright and capable persons who are also in league with demonic leadership and are therefore very formidable and able to argue their errors (1 Tim. 4:1). Winning an argument does not mean their view is true or right. If the current leadership are not able to answer objections to the truth, they should seek others more qualified in their fellowship which can aide them in recovering that member from his errors. However, the final decision of the congregation as a whole is final in regard to that congregation (Mt. 18:15-18). If a member persists in his opinion after the congregation has made a final decision, then that member should be placed under church discipline.

Whenever, such member(s) begin to go privately house to house to convince other members against the church leadership or the doctrine of the church, it should be recognized this this an attempt to divide the congregation and cause division which is a direct violation of God’s Word and an obvious sign of an apostate(s) in action. They should be rebuked and if they persist they should be placed under church discipline.

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CHAPTER NINE

Your Sacred Privilege

If you are a member of one of the Lord's congregations, you should consider that the second greatest privilege of grace apart from salvation. It is a privilege for many reasons. The Baptist pattern is not only the counsel of God (Lk. 7:29-30) and the command of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) and the apostolic model (Acts 2:41-42), but it is a pattern that God has designed with protections to prevent and deal with apostasy. It is also the position for the greatest reward in the world to come – the bride of Christ.

Revelation 2-3 is written to the Lord's congregations. These seven congregations were chosen in Asia (province in modern day Turkey) because they characterize the problems that all congregations must deal with in all generations until Jesus comes again.

These seven congregations are all about one thing – “*I know thy works*” and how Christ rewards those works here and now and in the future. These letters are explicitly addressed to the specific congregation named at the beginning of each letter, but applicable to all His “churches” as explicitly applied at the close of each letter and each letter is also directly applied to the saved church member within those congregations (“*he that hath an ear to hear*”). None of the rewards have to do with obtaining salvation in heaven,²⁰ but with obtaining the highest reward in the new heaven and earth, which is to be in the New Jerusalem as the bride of Christ.

²⁰ See my book, “The Bride of Christ” for an exegetical and historical based explanation of the promises to the overcomers.

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The greater multitude of the saved will not live in the New Jerusalem, but most will live outside the New Jerusalem upon the new earth:

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. – Rev. 21:24

Understand the above text in its context. The Great White Seat Judgment is already past (Rev. 20). This is the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1-2) and not only most of the saved will populate the new earth outside of the city, but there will be positions of authority over these “*nations of them which are saved*” that are called “*kings*” who are also saved persons.

The metaphorical bride of Christ is made up of those who “*have made themselves ready*” by their works of righteousness in this present age:

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. – Rev. 19:6-7

Not all of the saved are part of the metaphorical bride of Christ as many saved are found in another metaphorical corrupted woman:

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. – Rev. 18:4

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This harlot also is characterized as a city (Rev. 17:18) and a woman, but is the corrupted form of institutional Christianity that Paul warned the Corinthian congregation that it was in danger of becoming:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 2 Cor. 11:2-3

A metaphorical “*chaste virgin*” that becomes “*corrupted*” is a metaphorical “*harlot*.”

The collective number of all New Testament congregations is the present generic metaphorical bride of Christ in this present age:

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. – Rev. 22:16-17

Jesus uses the present tense “*say*” in verse 17 above to show that the Spirit and the Bride presently exist in this age and work together as characterized in all seven letters to the seven congregations which all letters end with the words “*the Spirit saith unto the churches*.”

Do you realize the privilege you have as a member of the Lord’s metaphorical bride (2 Cor. 11:2)? Do you realize the potential you have as a member of the Lord’s congregations?

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Your privilege is not merely the potential of obtaining the New Jerusalem as your home in the new heaven and earth, but right now the privilege of knowing truths that are given to the church alone that cannot be found outside His congregations. There are no grounds for boasting, as this privilege is wholly of grace and can easily be taken from you as it was given to you.

There is an elect within the elect. A good example of an elect within the elect are the disciples in the Lord's congregation while He was on earth (Acts 1:21-22). He chose twelve out of them to give special instruction and training. Out of the twelve, there were three more favored (Peter, James and John). Out of these three there was one more favored than the rest (John) who characterized himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

If God has revealed these truths unto you, you are blessed indeed. Don't take them for granted. It is true that many apostates from the Baptist Pattern are true children of God. God has simply removed their ability to accept this truth and given them over to error.

Thank God and bless His holy name for the mercy and grace you have received and the ability to discern and accept the truths he has blessed you with.

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CHAPTER TEN

Hold Fast! This is your finest Hour!

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.
– Prov. 24:10

As the time of the end grows closer it is even a greater privilege to be a member of the Lord's congregations because this is the predicted period of increase in apostasy and the decrease of His congregations.

This is not the time to faint, but to stand fast and double down in your commitment to the truth so that you can say with Paul at the end of your life:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: - 2 Tim. 4:6-7

In the early American Revolutionary War, when Captain John Paul Jones was outgunned and his ship was in danger of sinking due to the superior size and onslaught of the British war ship attacking it, was asked by his enemies whether he wanted to surrender, he replied “*I have just begun to fight.*”

Winston Churchill stood before the House of Commons in 1940 on June 18th after hearing that the massive army of Germany had overrun all the countries of Europe and was now about to aim their whole force against England, rallied England calling them to take their stand. He concluded his exhortation by saying,

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its

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Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour'. - **Winston Churchill** -
June 18, 1940 – Emphasis mine

You are living in the days of Satan's greatest attack upon the Lord's congregations. You are living in the days of the greatest decline of the Lord's Churches. This is not the day for "small" strength. This is not the day to give up. This is not the day to run.

Now is the day to stand, and having done all to stand, stand. Now is the day to begin to fight. May these be the days that in eternity to come all of heaven can look back on and say "This was their finest hour."

Hold the Fort!

1. Ho, my comrades, see the signal, waving in the sky!
Reinforcements now appearing, victory is nigh.
 - Refrain:
"Hold the fort, for I am coming," Jesus signals still;
Wave the answer back to Heaven, "By Thy grace we will."
2. See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on;
Mighty ones around us falling, courage almost gone!
3. See the glorious banner waving! Hear the trumpet blow!
In our Leader's Name we triumph over every foe.
4. Fierce and long the battle rages, but our help is near;
Onward comes our great Commander, cheer, my comrades,
cheer! – Philip P. Bliss, 1870

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Resource List

A. Church Truth

1. *In Search of New Testament Churches* by Mark W. Fenison
2. *The Bride of Christ* by Mark W. Fenison
3. *Passing the Torch: Convey Church Truth to the next Generation* by Mark W. Fenison
4. *Upon this Rock* by Mark W. Fenison
5. *The Kingdom of God, the Family of God, the Church of God* by Mark W. Fenison
6. *Identifying the True Church* by Mark W. Fenison
7. *The Faith: Once Delivered* by Mark W. Fenison
8. *Ephesians, The Lighthouse Notes Series*, by Mark W. Fenison

B. The Ordinances

1. *Wet or Baptized* by Mark W. Fenison
2. *Who is Invited to His Table* by Mark W. Fenison
3. *Why Infant Baptism is Wrong* by Mark W. Fenison

C. Salvation

1. *The New Birth* by Mark W. Fenison
2. *This is the Work of God* by Mark W. Fenison
3. *What is Man?* by Mark W. Fenison

D. Worship and the Holy Spirit

1. *The Baptism in the Spirit* by Mark W. Fenison
2. *Essential Worship, Personal and Public* by Mark W. Fenison

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E. Cults and the Charismatic Movement

1. *Some Non-Prophet Organizations* by Mark W. Fenison
2. *Counterfeit Revival* by Mark W. Fenison
3. *Outline Study of 1 Cor. 12-14 "Speaking in Tongues"* by Mark W. Fenison

F. The Bible

1. *The Landmark Edition of the King James Study Bible* by Larry Killion
2. *The Biblical Canon* by Mark W. Fenison

NOTE: With the exception of two of the above books all others can be found as FREE downloads on line at: http://victorybaptistchurch.webstarts.com/books_by_mark_fenison.html