

THE GREAT APOSTASY

THE TRUE MEANING

The word of God is unique in the way it is designed: the way it is arranged and presented. These words are not limited to purely detailing preordained events governed by the Lord, but they are the manual to life on Earth. Through these words the spirit of the servants of the Lord become enlightened. The word of God empowers the simple to become wise. It is the source of the rejoicing in the hearts of the Saints. It gives warning to His servants and also informs them of what is to come. The words of the Lord are pure words that have been purified seven times:

Psalm 12:6-7 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁶The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times. ⁷You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever.

The word of God is designed in such a way that no passage of Scripture can stand alone. Each part provides meaning to other passages of Scripture. The Lord has intelligently distributed topics, events and doctrines of salvation in different books of the Holy Scriptures. Nothing can be completely understood from one passage of Scripture.

Isaiah 28:9-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹“Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? ¹⁰For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little.” ¹¹For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, ¹²To whom He said, “This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,” And, “This is the refreshing”; Yet they would not hear. ¹³But the word of the LORD was to them, “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little,” That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

This passage of Scripture explains that the word of God was written precept upon precept, line upon line, and then distributed throughout the whole book. We have been blessed with the truth but who can understand it? This generation is in a prime position to understand the context of the word of God. We are the last generation of this age and we have increased knowledge through the technology we possess. The Lord has also made available to us His Spirit, which guides us into all truth.

The Lord Jesus Christ expounded on the fact that the word of God interprets itself when He said:

John 10:34-35 New King James Version (NKJV)

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods” ’? ³⁵If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

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Scripture cannot be broken or taken out of context. When taken out of context, the intended message is distorted and alignment with other passages of Scripture will be broken. Today, the lack of understanding is leading us to interpret the word of truth with methods that contradict the approach the Lord has set before us.

Attempts to understand the word of truth are quite often reduced to the mere study of words: finding the Greek or Hebrew meaning of a word and then building a case from the Holy Scriptures to support these findings. It is of paramount importance to realise that when we extensively study words within Scripture, we miss the intended meaning of what God has said. This leads us to overlook the fact that Scripture cannot be broken.

The subject of this study is the word 'apostasy', which is defined as: defection, abandonment, or renouncing of a religious or political belief or principle. The study of words leads to error. But it can be useful to gain understanding in what context the word was used. With the word apostasy, is there something we are missing from the pages of Scripture, or does it align with the original meaning of the word? When we consider Scripture as a whole, it can be seen that this meaning given to the word apostasy does not line up with the rest of Scripture. As we know Scripture cannot be broken. We really have to look into the period of time in question to understand why God inspired the use of the word apostasy or 'falling away'. Every word in the Holy Scripture is deliberate and only God can issue understanding of His word.

The King James version of the Bible used the words 'falling away', but many of the other versions have used the word apostasy. This passage of Scripture below, on which some have used to build a doctrine, mentions 'falling away' but does not speak of a defection or an abandonment by any stretch of the imagination.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ²not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

This passage of Scripture is addressing the events that will precede the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to gather His Saints at the appointed time of the rapture. We are told here that:

- There will be a 'falling away' first or an apostasy of some sort.
- There will be a temple of God in Jerusalem.
- The man of sin will be revealed.

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- The man of sin will sit as God in the temple of God unveiling himself to be God.

It is of paramount importance to acknowledge that the return of the Lord, and our gathering with Him, hinges on the fact that there is going to be a temple of God in Jerusalem in which the man of sin will parade himself to be God. Today there is no temple of God in the world, certainly not in Jerusalem (the City of our God). But according to Scripture, at the appointed time, there is going to be a temple of God in Jerusalem for this prophecy to be fulfilled. To fully understand this, we have to consider what the prophet Isaiah was inspired to tell us:

Isaiah 49:14-21 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁴ But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me." ¹⁵ "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶ See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me. ¹⁷ Your sons shall make haste; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste Shall go away from you. ¹⁸ Lift up your eyes, look around and see; All these gather together and come to you. As I live," says the LORD, "You shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, And bind them on you as a bride does.

¹⁹ "For your waste and desolate places, And the land of your destruction, Will even now be too small for the inhabitants; And those who swallowed you up will be far away. ²⁰ The children you will have, After you have lost the others, Will say again in your ears, 'The place is too small for me; Give me a place where I may dwell.' ²¹ Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have lost my children and am desolate, A captive, and wandering to and fro? And who has brought these up? There I was, left alone; But these, where were they?' "

In the above passage of Scripture, God has said Zion would never be forgotten because He has inscribed Zion on the palms of His hands. His people, the children of Israel, will surely return to Zion at the appointed time. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ is called Israel at the beginning of chapter forty-nine of the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 49:1-4 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹ "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. ² And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me." ³ "And He said to me, 'you are My servant, O Israel,, In whom I will be glorified.' ⁴ Then I said, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, And my work with my God.' "

If the Lord Jesus Christ is called Israel by God - then the church, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be the children of Israel. The Lord has said He will return the captivity of His people at the end of the age. He has compared this period of time with the days of Noah. There are many other passages of Scripture in which the servants of the Lord prophesied a

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period of time in which the Lord will bring back the captivity of His people. Most importantly, they prophesied that the salvation of Israel (the body of Christ, the people of God) will come out of Zion when the Lord brings back the captivity of His people:

Psalm 14:6-7 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁶You shame the counsel of the poor, But the LORD is his refuge. ⁷Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

This prophecy was also given to the prophet Jeremiah when the Lord asked him to write all the words He had given him:

Jeremiah 30:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²“Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying: ‘Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. ³For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’ ”

There has never been a massive defection or any form of defection from the church of God. The true servants of God would rather be put to death than renounce their belief. Those who are in the body of Christ remain in the body of Christ because:

John 10:28-29 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁸And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.

The Lord has said that no one can be snatched out of the body of Christ. There has never been a mass defection from the body of Christ and there never will be, because those in the body of Christ will remain in the body of Christ. Those who are not in the body of Christ but profess to be, were never in the Body of Christ. A church affiliation does not automatically incorporate anyone into the Body of Christ. There must also be obedience and faith to the truth. With that established, what then is the ‘falling away’ or the great apostasy? Surely there must be a number of Scriptures supporting the fact that there will be an apostasy in the context of what has been suggested? This is not the case. It is not going to occur during the rapture. There is never going to be any kind of mass defection from the Body of Christ, the church.

There is a parable to consider at this stage, in which ten virgins went to a particular place to meet a bridegroom:

Matthew 25:1-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³Those

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who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

⁶ "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

¹¹ "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹² But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

¹³ "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

These virgins knew that there was an appointed time when the bridegroom was set to return. These virgins did not stay in their respective cities or nations, but they had to go out (fall away) somewhere to meet with the bridegroom. This place was not in heaven according to this parable. While the bridegroom was delayed they all carried on with life. Five were wise and kept oil for their lamps. At the time of His return, five had no oil left for their lamps and the other five could not give them any oil. This parable is expounded in these two statements made by the Lord Jesus Christ. The first was when the Lord compared the day of His return to the days of Noah:

Matthew 24:37-39 New King James Version (NKJV)

³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Noah was a prophet of God who preached the gospel of salvation to his generation, informing them that the ark he was building will be the place of refuge from the flood that the Lord was determined to bring on the whole Earth. No one believed the word of God that he was preaching. At the appointed time, when Noah and his family went into the ark, the flood came and took them away.

There must have been many who professed to have believed in God, just as there is today. So, it will be at the appointed time at the end of the age, when a prophet will be sent by God to inform His people about the time of their visitation: when the Lord will bring back the captivity of His people. His people will fall away, as they did in the days of Moses, to the land the Lord has promised to their fathers: Abraham, Isaac and Israel. This will be a place of safety. Many professing believers will reject the word of God and will not follow the people

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of God out of the world into the land of Judea. The Day of the Lord will come upon them like a snare. This will include many who profess to be in the church of God. It was for this reason why the Lord said that those who are in Judah should flee into the mountains because His servants should be in Judea at that time.

Matthew 24:15-21 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁵ *"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),* ¹⁶ *"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."* ¹⁷ *Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.* ¹⁸ *And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.* ¹⁹ *But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!* ²⁰ *And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.* ²¹ *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

Judea will be the first place of refuge for the people of God. If you are not in Judea at the appointed time and you have not been sealed and sent to the nations by the Lord, then you will be in serious trouble. This will be the first apostasy; in which the children of Israel, the church, will fall away from the world into the land of Judea: present day Israel.

The second apostasy will come three and a half years after the return of the children of Israel to the land of Judea. There are many reasons why there is going to be a second apostasy. The main reason is deeply rooted in the lack of oil in the lamps of the people of God, as the Lord has said in the parable of the ten virgins. This phase at the end of the age will come when we see Jerusalem surrounded by armies.

Daniel 12:10-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁰ *Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.*

¹¹ *"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

The Lord compared this phase of the end of the age to the days of Lot:

Luke 17:28-32 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁸ *Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;* ²⁹ *but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.* ³⁰ *Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

³¹ *"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.* ³² *Remember Lot's wife.*

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This is the point in time that the apostle Paul was inspired to write to us about, to inform us that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ will not come until there is a falling away and the man of sin is revealed. It will be after the woman, described in the book of Revelation chapter twelve, has fled into the wilderness. There she will be nourished for three and a half years. Then the man of sin will be revealed and will sit in the temple of God parading as God.

As mentioned before, Scripture cannot be broken and every word of truth must align with what God has said. He has given reasons why He will do these things. The period of time at the end of the age was spoken about by the Lord to His disciples privately.

Matthew 24:3 New King James Version (NKJV)

³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Today, all those who are converted to the kingdom of God understand what the Lord Has said in the word of truth. As you can see from the Holy Scriptures, God has a plan for His people at the end of the age. This plan is not to remove them from the Earth but to protect them on Earth. Moving them from one part of the Earth to another is what is referred to as the apostasy, or falling away, in the Holy Scripture. Not falling away from the truth or to heaven, contrary to popular belief, but to a place of protection. This place of protection is in Judea: the present land of Israel. It will be upon the return of the captivity of the house of Israel, which the Lord has preordained, when He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh:

Joel 2:28-32 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ³² And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

It will be in the Mount of God, present day Judea, and in Jerusalem where there shall be deliverance from the calamities the Lord has proposed to befall the Earth. It will be at that time when the Lord will pour out His Spirit on His Saints to empower them to fulfil all His prophecies.

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The next phase in the great plan of God for our generation is to wait for the servant of the Lord: the Lord's messenger. This messenger will come to instruct the people of God on what will shortly come to pass in our generation - based on the words God has already spoken:

Malachi 4:5-6 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶ And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

This messenger will be similar to the one the Lord sent before His first coming: John the Baptise. He will not be Elijah the prophet of old but He will come in the Spirit of Elijah to return us to the truth, if we have the ears to hear.