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Market Street Fellowship
May 2015

MSF CONFERENCE 2015

THE GREAT APOSTASY

Apostasy: *a departure, desertion, falling or turning way, abandonment, renunciation*

SESSION 1

The Existence of the Apostasy

There has been a great falling-away from the original substance, nature, experience, and purpose of Christianity. What I mean is that Christianity, in general, looks and feels and functions almost nothing like it originally did when it began. Indeed, it is not the same thing. It has fallen away and lost what it was in the heart of God, and it has been made into something else.

I would imagine that most people here are already somewhat aware of this. But I doubt that any of us have seen the incredible extent of this falling away, this departure from the true thing. I don't mean that there are merely wrong doctrines or theologies, although these abound. I don't mean that there are simply wrong practices, and activities, although these also abound. **I mean that the very substance, nature, purpose, experience of Christianity today, almost everywhere you look, is something that man has built from his own resources and perspective because he has not truly known the Lord in Spirit and truth.** In general, Christianity is in a state of apostasy.

I don't speak these things from a desire to criticize. As far as I know myself, I have no desire to criticize. I actually don't like to do it. I don't have an ax to grind, or a bone to pick. I have not been hurt, and am now venting my anger or sadness or pain. I'm not trying to focus on the negative. I have received great mercy from the Lord, and know that I have been part of the problem. However, I feel it laid upon me by the Lord to try to expose, or speak plainly about, the fact **that man has built something in God's name, of which God is not the author.** And the sooner we can realize this, and the depth and gravity of it, and see our deception and involvement responsibility in it, the better we will be.

Truly I take no joy in criticizing. But necessity is laid upon me having seen something of the truth. When light shines in the heart, you become aware of two things. You see what IS real, and you also become uncomfortably aware of so much that isn't real... things that are real only in the dark. **There are many things that man has believed and built in the dark. And in the dark there is no ability to discern those things, to see what they are and what they are not.** Men stumble around in the dark, hoping that they are doing something right, something good. But light ends all controversy and debate. Light shows what is, and declares what is not. Light always brings judgment.

It doesn't surprise most people that Christianity is not what it ought to be. We can see *some* of the most obvious fruits of our apostasy. Many of us know that man has been building idols and towers of Babel from the very beginning. This is what man naturally does. In fact, even *before* man was governed by the dark lie of the Serpent, he was tempted by the idea of having something apart from God, being something apart from God, knowing something apart from God. He believed that lie, ate that lie, and became that lie. And everything he builds is an expression of it. He builds his own tower up to the heavens, which is for his own great name, in a kind of fleshly team-work, a common fleshly goal that God does not regard.

The greatest expressions of this lie are easy to see. It doesn't take much light to see a tower of Babel. But what *does* surprise us when we see it is the *hugeness* of it. What shocks us is facing, or taking the cover off of, the vastness, depth, and complexity of what man has built. It's like when you go up in an airplane and look out the window. Have you ever gone up in a plane and just been astonished at all that man has built? You look down and there is hardly a place that man has not touched, built, molded, changed, and developed for his own purposes. Cities go on for miles and miles, with all of their buildings and streets and bridges. Then suburbs and villages and towns as far as the eye can see. And even when you are flying over the country, you cannot help notice that every little green patch is marked, divided, delineated, squared off, and used by man. Man has done an incredible thing the world. We have built something that is enormous, vast, complex, and impressive. And the heart that sees Christ begins to see that this is exactly what man has done with Christianity as well. **We have built something in our own image, a place for flesh to live and have a great name, a way for man to reach the heavens.**

It is not only shocking in its size, but in its nature. I mean, coming to understand in what *way* it is wrong is truly overwhelming. What I mean is that its wrongness does not lie primarily in outward expression (where the failures can be seen by all), but rather in inward substance, life, light, and nature. **Light shows you that the apostasy from Christianity is a perfect departure from the life and light of Christ, organized by the spirit who works in the sons of disobedience, built by the**

ingenuity and wisdom of man, and yet all bearing the name of Christ. The sight of this is overwhelming. You want to scream, but who will listen?

There has been a great falling away from the substance, truth, Spirit, and experience of Christianity, and it must be proclaimed. Why must it be proclaimed? For one primary reason...**for the people who are looking for the way out.** There are some who are seeking truth, and are looking for the road to Zion. There are people who know that something is wrong, they just don't know what it is, or how big it is. They feel that something is not right—both around them and within them—but they cannot imagine how much could stand in Christ's name and yet have nothing to do with His nature or purpose for man. It is for these people that these things must be declared.

There are men and women who are wandering around the streets of Babylon looking for answers, looking for somebody that can explain, something that can help. They go from house to house in this man-made, man-centered city, looking for the reason **why** they feel the way they do. But the answer is not there. There are lots of ideas, lots of explanations, lots of interpretations, but no answers. **The answer is not there. The answer is found when the soul leaves that place, and finds a Christianity that stands entirely in the life and light of Jesus Christ Himself.**

I feel that these things must be said because man has shown, generation after generation, that he has no problem building the church with ZERO fear of the Lord, without the slightest concern that what we build is completely void of the Spirit of God. Man builds and builds, teaches and writes, and fills the world with a form of godliness without the power of Life. We have a kingdom that stands in words and not power. We have a gospel that stands in doctrines, creeds, beliefs, seminary educations, buildings, bookstores, lessons, and life-applications... but we know almost nothing of life, nothing of Spirit, nothing of the power and kingdom of God that reigns in the soul by grace.

Truly, there has been a great falling away, a great apostasy from the life, light, power, substance, and experience of true Christianity.

The Foretelling of the Apostasy

This apostasy was foreseen and foretold by Christ and the apostles. The fact that there was to be a great falling away or departure (from the Christianity that Christ established by His cross and in His own resurrected life) is clearly declared in the gospels. Most Christians, it seems, are either unaware of the multitude of Scriptures that proclaim this, or they wrongly apply them to a still-

future time. For years as a Christian, I had read the Scriptures foretelling a great apostasy, and assumed that the time was still to come. I must have assumed that the church is in pretty good shape now, but one day (near the time of the end) many would fall away from the true faith.

Now, many of the Scriptures that speak of the apostasy are mentioned with reference to the “end of the age”. I think this lends itself to some of the confusion. But this phrase “end of the age” is not a reference to the end of the *world*, but rather a physical end and total destruction of the entire Jewish economy, city, temple, sacrifices, shadows established by God. It was the end of the long Jewish age of natural types and shadows, promises and prophecies, figures and testimonies, that spoke of spiritual realities. The timing of the incredible falling away was to come around the same time as the events that surrounded God's judgment on natural Israel who had rejected their Messiah. Jesus spoke often about these things, about the signs of the end of that age.

In other words, it seems to me that there was a great initial reception (especially among the gentiles) of the true gospel. I don't mean to say that the early church was perfect and pure and fully mature. I don't believe that, and we know from many letters of the apostles that this wasn't the case. But I believe the gospel that was preached, received and experienced was true and pure, and that there was a true experience and a growth in the life and light of Christ. We read that they had come to Zion, the city of the living God. They lived by the Spirit and were learning to walk in the Spirit, putting off one man and putting on Another. They were experiencing the inward power of the cross that did “exceedingly abundantly more than they could ask or think.” They knew a light that dawned in their heart, the light that shines out of darkness to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. They knew the power of the resurrection, and a conformity to the death of Christ. They were beholding in a mirror the glory of the Lord and being transformed into the same image. They knew old things done away, and all things made new. They were learning to walk by faith, looking not at things which were seen but things which were unseen. Grace was teaching them to deny all ungodliness and live as lights in a dark world. They were abiding in love, walking in the light, knowing a fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with those who are born of His Seed. It is clear that, for a while, these were living experiences in many who were Christians. Though they needed to receive and grow in all of these things, still the gospel they received was true and pure and full of light and life.

However, it also seems clear that, after this initial reception of the gospel, and its spreading quickly through the Roman empire, there was a great falling away that both Christ and His apostles foresaw. I don't want to spend a lot of time proving this from Scripture. I want to spend most of my time describing the ways we have departed from the Spirit of Christ, and what it means to return to or recover the gospel. But consider these Scriptures:

- In **Matt. 24**, Jesus, when describing the things that would take place around the time of Jerusalem's destruction, said "11. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." And then "24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand."
- In **1 Tim 4**, Paul says "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron"
- **2 Pet 2:1** *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.*
- **Acts 20:28-31** *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*
- **2 Tim 3:1** *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
- **2 Thes 2** is particularly interesting. Paul talks about the great falling away, and the revealing of the man of sin, who sits in the temple of God, showing Himself to be god, exalting himself above all that is called God or is worshipped.
- **1 John 2:18** *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last*

hour..4:3And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

- In addition to these... we read of the church of Galatia being bewitched from the true gospel... trying to complete in the flesh what was started by the Spirit. We read of the Hebrews drifting away, trampling underfoot the Son of God, insulting the Spirit of Grace. We read of the Colossians and Galatians going back to the weak and worthless types and shadows of the external covenant, observing outward traditions and ceremonies which (at best) were pictures of Christ, the substance. The first few chapters of Revelation are about churches that, in one way or another, were already going astray. Some had lost their first love. Some thought they were strong and growing but were in fact wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Some had a name that they were alive, but were dead. Some were tolerating false apostles, lying teachers, the wages of unrighteousness, etc.

Again, I realize that all of these things are generally pushed off into the future. And honestly, I don't claim to understand all of these things clearly. But regardless of what may or may not happen in the future, or what may or may not have happened in the past, I do contend that we are living in and experiencing the reality of these verses right now. I contend that all around us, and deeply rooted within us, is the fruit of a great apostasy, an incredible falling away from the initial covenant of life and light in Christ.

Why An Apostasy?

Some might argue against all of this saying there is no way God would allow such a thing to happen so quickly after the establishing of His new covenant. I mean, after centuries of prophecies, promises, types and shadows, and after the coming, dying, resurrection of Christ, and the giving of His Spirit, would God really allow man to fall away so quickly and completely? Would God allow Satan's rage and cunning to have so much success against God's purpose for man?

That's a good question, and I don't think I can fully answer it. But I believe I can say a few things. The first is the fact that this same reality has repeated over and over from the beginning. For example, what happened immediately after God's incredible accomplishment of the natural creation, and the declaration that all was good? We know that then came the fall of man, a separation from the tree of life, and the world was filled with evil and violence. What happened after the massive judgment of all flesh in the great flood? The world was quickly filled with idolatry and rebellion, and man gathered together to build the Tower of Babel. What happened after God worked mightily to judge Egypt, part the Red Sea, and bring a people out for Himself? They refused to follow Him. They had idolatrous hearts and stiff necks and would not follow His

cloud into the Kingdom of God. What happened after God finally *did* get a generation to enter the promised land and begin to possess it? Just as soon as Joshua died, the people forgot the Lord, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. On and on it goes, throughout the history of God's involvement with man.

However, **at no point in the any of these stories (or in our own story) has the faithfulness of man been the measure of what God has accomplished or given. I mean, the incredible gift, love, mercy, grace, and power of God are not measured by the extent to which man knows it, receives it, or walks in it.** There were periods of hundreds of years in Israel where almost *nobody* walked in covenant with God. During the entire time of the judges. During several long periods of the kings. Israel abandoned their God almost entirely. But man's rebellion and defection from the truth was in no way a stain on God's covenant, nor did it in any way lessened what God had accomplished and given to His people. They just failed to experience it. They failed to know it and walk in it.

It has always been this way, and I don't fully understand why. But I can say two things with some certainty:

1) God has always shown incredible kindness, love, and mercy to man in opening up a way of redemption, relationship, and glorious salvation. But He has also always seemed willing to “let God be true, and let all men be liars.” I mean, He will let all men go their own way, and walk into destruction, before He changes the Way by which He offers life. (God said to Moses, “Moses, step aside. I will destroy them as one man, and start over with you!”) He offers everything that He is and has according to the overflowing of His love and goodness. But He offers it according to a specific covenant, a specific way of coming to Him, a way of turning to His light, and following it out of a man and a kingdom that is hostile to Him. **Man must come to God, know God, find God, according to the WAY that He has provided.** That way is Christ, and apart from the true reception of Christ, and the true redemption and salvation in Him, there is no hope for man. If all men forsake that Way, it still stands just as perfect, kind, good, wise, loving, and merciful as ever. If only one person walks in that Way, it is just as kind and good and full of lovingkindness as if 7 billion people walked in the Way. God has provided a perfect Way in which He does all the work, supplies all the grace, and does all the miracles in the soul of man. But man must turn to the light, cling to it, and follow the Lord in the Way He has provided.

2) It is clear from the words of Jesus and the apostles, and from a multitude of stories in the Old Testament, that the Lord never expected the Way of Life to be a broad way. I mean, regardless of great miracles in Acts, and the initial reception among the gentiles, and

the quick spreading of Christianity among the Roman empire, Jesus always knew that “narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

SESSION 2

In the last session I introduced what I'm calling the Great Apostasy. My primary point was that there has been a great, unimaginable falling away from the true nature, substance, purpose, and experience of Christianity. Most of what we see today in what is called the church of Christ has been erected in “the night when no man can work.” It has risen up, taken root, and spread in the dark, that is, in the absence of a true inward knowledge and experience of the life and light of Jesus Christ.

In this session I want to look at three general headings or broad categories that describe the nature of this falling away. And then, in my remaining two sessions I would like to get into more specifics. The three general headings are as follows: We have fallen away from the understanding and experience of **1) the fact that Christianity comes down before it goes up. 2) the fact that Christianity, in its true substance and definition, is spiritual and eternal life, and 3) that Christianity (this life) is only known and experienced in the light that shines from it.**

We could spend the entire conference sharing about any one of these three, but its my desire here to be somewhat brief and succinct.

Christianity Comes Down

This may sound like a strange thing to say, and maybe it *is* a strange way to put it. But it speaks to what I think is a massive and foundational misunderstanding in many people. Let me begin by reading a few Scriptures.

Genesis 11:1 *Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. 3 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a*

name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Isa 55:10 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

James 1:16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

James 3:14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

One of the greatest errors and foundational misunderstandings in the body of Christ (in my opinion) is a failing to see that every single aspect of Christianity comes down from the Father of lights. In other words, it does not originate in you. It is not something that man makes or offers or does or builds up to God from the earth. **It is something that comes down from the heavens, works and increases in the soul, and bears fruit upward.**

To some extent Christians understand this, at least conceptually. I mean, most would admit that our righteousness is not our own. On a true and false quiz, we would confess that righteousness is the nature of Christ working and reigning in the soul. We might even say (though perhaps not understand) that love is not our own. Love comes from the Lord, and works in us as something that is foreign to us. But what I'm trying to tell you right now is that EVERYTHING, every single thing that is good and perfect and that God accepts comes down from the Father of lights.

Of himself, man has nothing that God accepts. He does not have the right kind of anything. He has the wrong kind of everything. He has the wrong kind of love. The love man knows is self-love, which is motivated and energized by the nature of sin, the spirit that works in the

sons of disobedience. He has the wrong kind of light. The light that is in him by nature is darkness, and how great is the darkness.! He has the wrong kind of knowledge. Man's knowledge is the accumulation of information that is held in the brain, and not a union with Truth that is known in the soul. He has the wrong kind of faith. Man's is a faith that arises from intellectual conclusions, natural expectations, hopes, and beliefs. The faith of the Son of God, however, is the light of life that comes from above, and causes the soul to experience the substance of spiritual reality.

Man is not the origin or source of anything that God accepts. What then is man? Man is the place where true Christianity can plant itself and bear its own fruit. In other words, **man is soil for a Seed that comes down from heaven.** Man is the land where God desires an increase of His own kingdom and glory. Man is the bride to whom the Lord unites in order to bring forth an increase of His kind. Man is the field where the Lord looks for 30, 60, 100 fold what was sown. Man is the temple that was created for the cloud of His presence. Man is the city where a King sets His throne and establishes His law. However, all that is good, all that is perfect does not come up unless it first comes down. Man says, "what goes up must come down". God says, "it must come down before it goes up!"

What have we fallen away from in this great apostasy? We have fallen away from the very first rule of the kingdom, the most fundamental thing. **We have fallen away from the fact that the kingdom of God is sown like a foreign Seed into the heart of man.** It is a Seed that has its own life, its own nature, its own growth. It comes out from the hand of God, the mouth of God, the love of God. It is the same nature as God. It bears His life, His light, His purpose. It's all right there wrapped up in one perfect Seed. It comes out from Him, and it lands in you.

It doesn't land in you and then hope that you just believe in it. It doesn't land in you with a desire to teach you how to be a moral, upstanding citizen, and a faithful church attendee. It doesn't land in you and teach you how to sing pretty songs and believe accurate facts. No! It lands in you and it immediately begins to plow up the land, judge the land, break apart, cast out, tear down, all that is already growing there. **The Seed does not teach the soil how to live for God. The Seed is the life of God given to reign in the soil!**

What happened when the Seed of God landed on your soil? Do you know this Seed? Have you felt its power? Have you allowed it to reign? Did it appear in you as a foreign life that demanded its own increase? Did it take root downward and bear fruit upward? This is Christianity. It comes down from above. It is living and active, sharper than a two edged sword? Have you felt its sharp blade? Have you been cut by it? How deep is your wound? Is it incurable?... or are you hoping to heal over without accepting your death?

Do you know a Christianity that comes down and burns in your heart like an oven. Is he burning up all things that were already growing, leaving neither root nor branch? Does He sit in you like a refiner and purifier of silver, so that an offering in righteousness can ascend back to the Lord? Do you know the refiner's fire, the launderer's soap, the one who appears as a swift witness against all that is of a contrary nature to Him? This is the Christianity that comes down from above!

Has your Christianity grown up from below? Has it risen up from your own beliefs, interpretations, wisdom, studies, classes, sermons, and workbooks? Did somebody teach it to you? Did it come from the earth, having an appearance of godliness but not knowing the power? Does it consist in true words but not in the power of an indestructible life? Does it sit there in your mind to tell you what to believe and how to live your life? If this is what Christianity is to you then you have not met the Seed.

Where did your Christianity come from? Is it the fruit of your effort? Is it the accumulation of your reading? Did it grow up in the dark from a seed that God rejects? You know that there is another seed that seeks glory in your heart. There is the seed of the Serpent, and there has been enmity between the two from the beginning.

How much of your Christianity is from below? That is my question. James says that the wisdom from below is "earthly, sensual, and demonic". Where did your wisdom come from? Jeremiah said that no man can teach his neighbor the new covenant. So who taught you? Paul says that the Spirit teaches us to pray, and that we must pray all times in the Spirit. Who taught you to pray? Have we received something that didn't come from above? Listen to what John the Baptist says:

John 3:25 Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.... 31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.32 And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

A man can receive NOTHING unless it has been given to him from heaven. "Apart from Me you can do NOTHING" Jesus said. "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh profits NOTHING". **Friends, man has built so much that is nothing. It looks like something, but it will come to**

nothing. It will be shown to be nothing. It is a Christianity that crept up from below in the darkness and deception of the great apostasy.

Christianity comes down from above, takes root downward, and bears fruit upward. Consider the parables of Christ. Are not so many of them about something that is given to man by a Master with an expectation for increase? There is something given to one that does not deserve it, and that gift is either squandered or it bears fruit to the Giver. A seed given, a mina given, a talent given, a vineyard given, an inheritance given. In no parable is man expected to produce the talent, or become the increase, or make the fruit. **No... the gift comes from above. And the soul of man is the steward of the heavenly gift.** Everything comes down and works in the soul of man as a perfectly foreign thing. And what is this thing? That leads me to my second point.

Christianity is Spiritual Life

So, what is this *thing* that we receive from above? What comes down and is the very substance, reality, source, and nature of all that must work in us, and all that God accepts? In a word, **it is Spirit and it is life.** Let me read a few Scriptures.

Ezek. 37:1 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. 2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. 3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." 4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6 I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. 9 Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' " 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.... 14 I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.' "

Joh 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

Rom 8:2 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Rom 8:10 *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

1Co 15:45 *And so it is written, "the first man Adam became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.*

2Co 3:6 *who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

Why all these Scriptures? To demonstrate that the gift, the promise, the salvation has been Spirit and life from the beginning.

Maybe that sounds obvious to you. Be careful if it does. When spiritual reality sounds familiar and obvious, there is usually a problem. When you're seeing something of the Lord in light, (even the most basic and foundational thing), it does not feel obvious or familiar. It seems shocking, foreign, and overwhelmingly beautiful. Knowledge in the brain can seem obvious. Words can be heard and learned and become very familiar. People love to learn words and become familiar with spiritual concepts and feel like they are wise. But Spirit and Life NEVER lets you feel like that.

Now I want you to consider something. Jesus presented Himself as a Man who was sowing seeds. What was He sowing? We know that He was walking from city to city teaching and declaring things to them. But what was He offering the world? Was it spiritual facts and accurate theology? Was it laws and rules and regulations? He answers this question in one of the verses I just read, "The words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are life." Now obviously the sounds of his vocal chords, and his tongue, and his lips were not Spirit and life. But the Source of these sounds, the realities testified to by them, and the thing that the heart could receive by receiving His words... THAT was indeed Spirit and life.

The words described a reality from above, and the heart that would hearken to those words, turn to the Lord and accept the truth of those words, would receive the thing that the words testified of. What was that? Again, it was Spirit and life.

This Spirit and life, or spiritual life, or life from above, is the very substance of Christianity, the substance from which we have fallen. It is this life that Christians, in general, have not known. They have not known its nature, its other-ness, its power, or its enmity towards every other kind of life.

Not knowing *this* life—true spiritual life—man has built up a Christianity in another life. The substance of it is the wrong life, the nature of it is the wrong nature, the power of it is the wrong power, and it stands in the wrong man. You see, it is not the Bible that we have fallen from. It is the life that is testified to in the Bible. That is precisely what Jesus told the Pharisees, when they fought against Christ with His own words.

John 5:37 And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. 38 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Do you realize that the Pharisees were using Christ's words to reject Christ? Peter tells us that it was the Spirit of Christ testifying in all the prophets about the Messiah, about His suffering and glory to follow. Here was Christ, the life, standing before the Pharisees. And what were they doing? **They were using the words of Christ to reject the life of Christ. They were using His own words to protect themselves against the power and enmity of His life.**

Why do I say the “enmity of His life”. Because His life is at enmity with what we call life. His life is a foreign life. It is not natural, it is spiritual. It is not from below, it is from above. It is not evil, fallen, and enslaved to the Serpent. It is clean, holy, and does only what it sees in the Father. His life does not mix what man has called life. **And we will use anything, even the words of Life, to protect ourselves from the life itself.**

“Light has come, but men love darkness because their deeds are evil.” Men hide from Him, they always have. They do not necessarily hide from His words; they hide from the LIFE behind the words, the life testified to by the words. As long as they can control the words, then there is nothing to fear. **But when the Life defines His own words, then there is a great confrontation. There is a confrontation between two seeds.** There is a war between Israel and the Philistines in the land of our soul.

The life of God has come from above to exalt itself in the soul of man. This is the gospel. This is

the gift. This is the promise. "Can these bones live?" "Oh... you know Lord" "Prophecy to the breath! Let the breath of the Lord come upon the dry bones! Give them life from above!"

All of Christianity is bound up in this breath. It is the power of God in His own breath to bring life where there was death. All things of Christianity proceed from this breath, from this Spirit, from this life, or they are nothing. Worse than nothing, they are an apostasy. They are a great falling away from the substance, nature, and power of the gospel.

Now the first Christians who received the gospel, knew it was a life from above. They saw it was life from above that did not mix with the Serpent's lie. Ananias and Saphira proved that right in the beginning. Life was death to them and to their lie.

When the apostles were thrown in prison in Acts chapter 5, the angel of God released them. Acts 5:19 "But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 'Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.'"

The apostles continually spoke of this life, and its powerful work within them. They were "laying hold of eternal life." And this life was doing "exceedingly abundantly more than they could ask or think through the power that worked within them." They were "carrying about in their body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in their body." They had been reconciled by His death, but were being "saved by His life." They were learning the "law of the Spirit of life" as the Spirit Himself wrote it on the tablets of their hearts. They spoke of being baptized into His death, raised with Him, to walk in the newness of His life. That's what their salvation *was*. It was life from above. John said, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

The gift of God was *spiritual* life, and not any kind of natural life. They were new creatures, spiritual beings, made so by the Spirit of God. And they were learning by the Spirit, the holy anointing. They were living by the Spirit and learning to walk in the Spirit. Indeed the kingdom that they knew was "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

In the beginning, Christianity was life in the Spirit, life from above. It was life given to increase and reign in the soul over death. It was life that man did not have and did not know. "Let the dead bury the dead, but you come follow me." "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourself."

But look what it has become! Look how far it has fallen. Look how soon it fell to the earth and

became a natural thing! What is Christianity now? Is it life? Is it Spirit? Is it a life that comes down from a foreign place and leads the heart back to its Source? Is that how it is preached today? Or is it an earthly thing, something that crept up in the dark, when the light of life had gone out in hearts.

What is Christianity to the masses? Is it not spiritual words, interpreted by natural minds, and applied to natural lives? Is it not the writings of spiritual men whose words we worship, but whose Spirit we do not know? Is it not the study and application of the words that came out from life, without the inward reign of that life, and true conformity to it? Do you see what we have done?

What do we do when we come together? So often we speak of things we don't truly understand or live. We sing of and celebrate things that we do not experience? We pray to God without His Spirit? Teach each other what we do not even know? We speak in His name what does not come out from His life! **We have no fear of the Lord! We have not seen Him! We have not learned what Job learned.**

Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 2 "Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me... Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

Who are the ministers of our gospel? Are they ones who have truly seen the Lord, walked in His counsel, and trembled at his word. Do they come to us like Paul, "in weakness, fear, and much trembling, not in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstrations of the Spirit and power"? Do they offer nothing of themselves, but only the measure of Christ that has become real in them? Or are they men and women that come in their own natural giftings, natural learning, with very persuasive words and great abilities to communicate, motivate, persuade, and entertain?

Do our ministers make us feel poor in spirit, weak in ourselves, hungry for righteousness, hated by the world, uncomfortable in the earth, hateful towards evil and desperate for spiritual life? Or do

they make us feel wise and learned, useful to the Lord, loved by the world, comfortable in the earth, accepted just as we are, and motivated to serve their vision.

There has been a great apostasy, a great falling away from the original life, source, nature, and reality of Christianity. Light has come, but men have loved darkness. And in that darkness we can neither see what the Lord has given, nor what we have done with it. And that brings me to the third major heading.

Life Is Known in its Own Light

This is the third major reality from which we have fallen away, and I suppose you could say it is the cause of the other two. If you miss the true light, how can you see anything rightly? If you see with the wrong eye, you cannot have a right view.

I think it is true to say that, in general, man has tried to know, discover, experience Christianity in the wrong light, in the light that is darkness, in the light of a fire he has kindled for himself. Consider these Scriptures:

Isa 50:10 "Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness And has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God." But... 11 "Behold, all you who kindle a fire, Who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled— This you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment."

Isa 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Matt 6:22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

There is a light that shines out from God, by which all things of God are known, and apart from which nothing of God can be known. The Scriptures testify of this light on every page, but the Scriptures are not the light itself. John the Baptist testified of the light, but he was not the true light that came into the world. All of the law and the prophets testified of the light, and their testimony is sure and true and cannot fail, but these are not the true light.

What is the true light? The true light is the actual view of God, His view of all spiritual things, as they truly are in His Son. The light is the living, bright, reality that God knows, and is, and makes manifest. The light is living truth communicating itself. It is spiritual reality radiating forth in its own perfection, piercing the darkness with the brightness of the Lord's appearing, and casting down every shade of darkness that has risen up in the hearts of men. (True light shines inwardly, never outwardly. It is not natural, physical, outward. It is spiritual, eternal, and therefore inward).

All Scripture came out from this light, and points back to this light, but it can still be read in the dark. All of God's miracles and signs, types and shadows, promises and prophecies, faithfully declare and bear witness of this light, but this testimony can be misunderstood, misapplied, and twisted for man's glory.

Why? Because there is another kind of light that man knows in the first birth, the flesh, the adamic man. There is a kind of light that man chose in the garden when he decided to be like God. This is the light of man's own kindling, the light that is darkness. It is "earthly, sensual, and demonic." Those three words of James were spoken about man's wisdom, which is like man's light... it is how man sees, understands, interprets and knows.

First of all, it is earthly. That is to say, it is extremely limited by its own nature and kind. It is according to earthly things, earthly senses, earthly understanding, earthly reasoning and logic. Even if man's light was not tainted by sensuality and perverted by Satan, it would still be incredibly limited by the simple fact that it is from below, of a much lower kind, bound to a shadowy creation, with a very low ceiling.

But man's light is not just earthly, it is sensual. That is to say, the view of what is real is governed by carnal senses, earthly passions, lusts of the flesh and the eyes. **Man sees according to what he desires.** In other words, first he decides what he wants, and *then* he decides what he thinks about things. **The mind of man always follows his heart.** First the heart loves something of the flesh, the earth, the pleasures of sin, and *then* the mind justifies this, rationalizes evil, excuses selfishness, comes to its own conclusions and opinions and deductions to defend its choice. But the opinions and conclusions all stand upon the heart's desires. Our most vehemently defended theologies are usually guarding our deepest desires, insecurities, lusts, and fears. I mean, we do not see things objectively and then come to heart conclusions. Its just the opposite. First the heart decides what it wants, and then that is the lens by which we see things. So man's light is sensual.

And it is demonic. Why demonic? Because there is a spirit that works in the sons of disobedience.

There is a god of this world whose kingdom is the fallen, dark land of the adamic soul. Because there is one who has taken Adam captive to do his will, to express his nature, to work against his own salvation and his own eternal good. When man speaks from himself, he speaks out from seed he swallowed in the beginning, the nature of his father the devil. Even when Peter spoke his own mind, Jesus said, "Get behind me Satan." And when James and John suggested calling down fire on Samaria, Jesus said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of."

So with a light that is the combination of these three things, men think they know the truth! With this filthy lens men read words that came from the pure mouth of God. With spiritual eyes completely closed, men boast in their knowledge, their degrees, their understanding of the Lord and His ways. With this false light man reads the words that came out from true light. This is very easy to do. It is easy to read the words that testify of the light. And having read those words, studied them, gathered together all those testimonies into carnal minds, men can also form their own conclusions, explanations, beliefs, and applications from words that originally came from out from true light. In this way we are "Always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

And then, even beyond this, men can create schools that teach these conclusions and explanations. You can get a masters degree in darkness. You can get a PhD in wisdom from below. And once you are fully trained, in the words of Jesus, you can "travel over land and sea seeking to win one convert, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourself."

Friends, these are hard words. And I am not asking you to believe my words. I truly don't want you to believe anything I'm saying, unless the Spirit of God witnesses to it in your own heart. But if the Spirit of God is indeed bearing witness in your heart, then turn to Him and accept what He is showing you. Accept the hugeness of the problem; understand that there has been a great apostasy.

Here is what I am trying to communicate to you: **Spiritual life is what comes down from above, and it must be known in its own light, in the light that it provides.** It cannot be known any other way. Only in this light do we see light. And apart from this light, we walk in the night, where nothing good can be done.

Somebody argues and says, "No, but the Scriptures are our light!" Who's understanding of the Scriptures? Your understanding? Well then, is it the understanding you have now, or the understanding you had last week? Have we not learned by now that words on a page can mean 100 things to 100 different people?... and each of those 100 people will change their opinion just as soon as they read the next persuasive book. Have we not seen how many atrocious things have

been done in the name of God's words? Didn't the majority of the Jews use the Scriptures to validate their rejection of Christ?

Somebody says, "But the words of Scripture are *true* words! You can trust them!" I agree, they are true and trustworthy words. But when they are read in a false and twisted light, they become whatever we want them to be. They are the words of God, given by His Spirit, recorded by faithful prophets and apostles. But they must be read and understood in the light from which they came, or their meaning and significance are supplied by the reader. True words are only helpful when they lead the soul back to their Source.

This is why you must become a little child to know the things of the kingdom of God. You must become as one who knows absolutely nothing, and is willing to be shown even the most simple things. True light is hidden from the wise and learned, but revealed to babes. It is revealed to those who have a constant distrust of their own understanding, who *feel* their inability to understand spiritual things, who know the danger and contrariness of their own mind, and are terrified of it. "He who thinks he knows, does not yet know as he ought". But to those who will become small, and foolish, true light will dawn, and the gift of God will be seen and known. "The secret of the Lord belongs to those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

SESSION 3

In the first session I tried to just establish the fact that there had been an apostasy, a great falling away from the true nature, substance, and reality of Christianity. That is, I tried to demonstrate that what most call Christianity today is a different thing than what Christ established. It has a different source, and exists for different reasons... though it generally uses many of the same words and outward forms and expressions.

In the second session I tried to describe this apostasy in three general headings. I said that the falling away was from the reality that **1)** Christianity comes down from above, take root downward, and bears fruit upward. **2)** That Christianity in its essence is life in and by the Spirit of God. And **3)** that the spiritual life that comes from above is only known and experienced in the light that it provides. It is known and experienced in its *own* light, and not in the false light that man supplies from below.

In the time that we have left, I want to look at some of the fruits of this apostasy. I mean, I want to get into some of the specific ways that falling away from these 3 primary things has affected and

changed everything else in Christianity, making it primarily an earthly and natural thing that is powered from below.

The biggest problem in Christianity today is not that believers are doing inherently bad things. I mean, the problem is not that Christianity fails to produce moral people, or fails to feed the homeless, or build schools, etc. No, the problem is not really in what it is “doing”, but rather in what it IS, or perhaps WHERE it is from. Generally speaking, it is from below. It is something natural. **It is something that could continue to exist almost exactly as it is with or without God. If God decided to leave this planet, and completely disassociate Himself entirely with the human race, much of Christianity would go on functioning as though nothing had even happened.** Why is that? It is because so much of what we are, what we know, and what we do is entirely earthly. In man's religion, and man is the god. In man's Christianity, man is the source and the goal, and God is not needed.

In stark contrast to this, the Christianity of the apostles was Christ plus nothing. It was Christ “working in them both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” If you removed Christ from the picture, you would have nothing but weak and worthless men, who had absolutely nothing to offer in themselves. You would have men who were the scum of the earth, mostly uneducated and unimpressive, who (as Paul says) would be of all men most to be pitied. Paul lived by the sufficiency of grace, by the working of God's power in His soul. Apart from this present, powerful, inward light and life, Paul could not do anything. He had nothing, was nothing, and could preach nothing. For him, Christianity was Christ and Him crucified, working in his soul a true conformity to death, and an ever increasing experience of resurrected life. Oh, how we have fallen!

What has happened in this great apostasy? What has risen up? What has the enemy built in the darkness of man's imaginations and aspirations? Very much, I believe. He has built Babylon, the city of confusion. A system that has a form of godliness but does not know the power and life and light of Christ. I want to talk about some of these things.

Again, I have divided these things up into categories, and am going to talk about them under some basic headings. Since all of these things have to do with the church (which is the Lord's body, the thing that God has created through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ), we will start with the church.

The Church of God

The church is a huge subject, and we could spend a great amount of time discussing it. I just want

to say some general things today. Without understanding the three things we have already discussed, it is impossible to understand and experience the church of Jesus Christ. Why? Because the church of Jesus Christ is purely spiritual (though part of it still has vessels in the earth), it is from above, born above, citizens above, and it is only known in spiritual light. In fact, the rock upon which Christ builds His church is what Peter experienced in Matthew 16 - "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you Peter, but my Father who is in heaven." Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, substance, and life of the church, and the revelation of Him in the soul is how the Father builds His church.

The church is the resurrected, corporate body of Jesus Christ. It is His; it is the increase of Him. From the very beginning, this is what God has desired. This has been His eternal purpose. He had all that He wanted and loved in His Son, the radiance of His own glory, the perfect image of Himself, sharing each other in their own pure Spirit. He needed nothing, but He wanted something. He wanted to plant His perfect Son in the soil and reap a harvest of His kind. He wanted to give His Son as a King, and fill a land with His rule. He wanted to fill a temple with the glory and presence of His Son, and make a house of prayer for all nations. This is the church.

God has used many pictures to describe it. It is a bride that receives Christ's seed and bears His increase. It is a field that receives His seed and produces a harvest. It is a land that receives a King, and as the King is revealed, He conquers the land and conforms every inch of it to His dominion. The church is a temple, made up of living stones, of which Christ is the life, and the cloud that fills all and in all. The church is a corporate vessel, a living vessel, made alive by the Resurrection and the Life. It is a vessel of honor that receives the life and love of God, and bears His name and glory.

Where did the church come from? It didn't come from man's wisdom, power, or dedication. It was joined in death to the One who came down from above, and then came out of the grave, joined to Christ the Head. The church was baptized into His death, buried with Him, and made alive with Him. It was put into a blood covered door, made to eat a dead lamb, and came out in the morning of a new day. It "was regenerated unto a living expectation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." **The church was BORN of the Spirit, not made from the earth.** And even though it has a vessel in the earth, it is being continually called out of the earth, severed from the first birth, the first nature, crucified to the world and the world to it. That's really what the word church means. The word in Greek means "called out" or "called forth".

How does the church grow? The growth of the church is the increase of Christ in every living stone. It is the increase of His kingdom, power, nature, reign, and righteousness in every member. The church grows when Christ conquers cities, tears down high places, and kills uncircumcised

flesh in your soul. It grows when He expands the boundaries of Israel within you.

Now, what is the church that has sprouted up in the apostasy? It is none of these things. First of all, it is built from below, from the ground up. The foundation of it is beliefs in the mind, creeds, doctrines, ideas and theologies, all interpreted and applied with man's understanding. It is built up and established by traditions, causes, ceremonies, buildings, dress codes, natural relationships, natural giftings, music, tithes, liturgies, and morals. There are as many different kinds of churches as there are leaders with different ideas. Man's church has different "vision statements", different beliefs, and completely different functions, purposes, and pursuits. There are churches that match different personalities, ages, cultural and musical preferences. In so many ways, man's church is built in his own image and likeness. It is made by man, and therefore it functions for man.

How does man's church grow? It grows primarily in three ways, at least three ways that are recognized and accepted by most as true measures of increase. Its growth is measured by the number of people, the size of the operation, and the amount of money generated. These are often called "signs of God's blessing" or "favor". This is what the light from below can recognize and appreciate.

The Worship of God

Having fallen from and misunderstood so many foundational things, what is the worship that man now knows and performs. What does man even understand the word "worship" to mean? Do we even think about this? Do we even wonder what true worship is?... or do we just do what we were taught in children's church 40 years ago? Let me ask you—could there be a more important question than this? What is the worship that God seeks and accepts? Stop and think about these things! Who taught you to worship God? How do you know He is accepting your worship? What is worship?

In the darkness of the great falling away, the reality of worship has been lost. Now, worship has to do with the offering up to God what is pleasing, acceptable, and glorifying to Him. Do you know what that is? Do you have it? Man generally doesn't even bother asking the Lord, seeking the Lord, humbling himself before the Lord to know what true worship is. We just do whatever we were taught, whatever we enjoy, whatever we think is pretty, whatever we appreciate, or think that God should appreciate. We put money into a dish, but is that worship? We sing songs, clap our hands, and feel happy. But is that what God is seeking? We kneel and rise, repeat words, put

on nice clothes... is this worship. I'm just asking you to consider these things.

Please don't be offended at these words. Take them to the Lord with a small and humble heart, and ask Him what He sees, and what He desires. The Lord told Moses and the children of Israel that they needed to come out of Egypt, a three days journey, to offer sacrifices to the Lord their God. They needed to leave Egypt in order to be able to worship Him. Pharaoh asked Moses why Israel couldn't just worship their God right there in Egypt, and Moses said their worship would be an abomination to Egypt. It was something foreign, contrary, and despicable to the inhabitants of that land. And besides, he said, "We do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there." Do you see what Moses said? "We don't even know what God wants until He reveals it!"

And what did God reveal to them when they had left Egypt and come into covenant with Him? Did he let them worship Him according to their own ideas and emotions? Did he just say, "Ok, you made it out! Now everybody think of your own way to worship Me!" Did He show any regard for their own offerings and assumptions and expectations of who He was and what He wanted? No! In fact, weren't these things EXACTLY what He warned them against! Wasn't that the greatest sin of Israel throughout the generations, that "everyone did what was right in their own eyes"? Wasn't the very first commandment that they were not allowed to worship God according to their own ideas, or make any likeness of Him according to *anything* they had seen with their natural eyes? That's what an idol is. An idol is simply an idea of man, regardless of whether it has been carved into a physical image.

The Lord revealed a VERY specific way of worshipping Him. There was only ONE kind of worship that He wanted or accepted. There were not two or two hundred. There was just one, and it was according to a very specific pattern. What was the pattern? **It was the pattern of Christ, the pattern of His Son. Here was the rule: All that rises up to Me from my redeemed people must be the image, fragrance, glory, and increase of Christ.** It was NOT according to man's ideas, zeal, creativity, or imagination. It was a very specific revealed pattern that pointed to a very specific Son. "Moses, be very careful to make all of these things exactly according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mountain." God warned him three times.

And what happened when there was even the slightest variation in this pattern. In other words, what if the worship did not reflect the pictures, testimonies, and shadows of Christ? What happened with Aaron's two sons who simply brought the wrong fire to the altar to burn incense? They were supposed to bring fire from the brazen altar, but they brought fire from another source. What's the big deal? Why would that matter? Did it matter? It seemed to matter quite a bit to God! Did he accept their offering? Far from accepting their offering, GOD KILLED THEM with fire!

What does that mean?!?! Isn't it clear what it means? God seeks and receives ONE specific thing! Friends, again... what is worship? It is the offering to God of what is pleasing, acceptable, and glorifying to Him? **What is pleasing, acceptable, and glorifying to Him? Clearly, it is Christ alone. In the old covenant, it was Christ in types and shadows according to a very clear and specific pattern. In the new covenant, it is Christ in Spirit and truth.** Christ in substance and reality. Christ filling the new temple, the inward tabernacle, and ascending to the Father in all of the ways that He has fulfilled the sacrifices, offerings, incenses, and fragrances of the outward tabernacle.

But man, just like Cain, says "what about MY offering?" "Don't you like what I can give you? Don't you appreciate what I have gathered and presented to you?" The nature of Cain in the natural man cannot accept that his offering is rejected. He cries out, "Why do you have a preference, Lord? What's the big difference? Why are you so particular?" And God's answer has always been the same. "Be very careful that you only offer to Me what I have given to you to offer!" "You have nothing in your flesh that I want. There is nothing in your ideas that I regard." Man says, "but Lord, I put my heart into it!" And the Lord responds, "Oh blind eyes.... your heart is exactly the thing that corrupts the offering."

God does not accept the offering of the first; He only accepts the offering of the second. He does not accept the offering of Cain, only the offering of Abel. He will not accept Ishmael, only Isaac. He will not accept Esau, only Jacob. He will not accept Saul, only David. The first is rejected, though it be the best of the cursed earth. Though it outwardly appears to far exceed the second.

God is not worshipped in or by the flesh. Jesus said, "I do not receive testimony from man." (John 5:34) and "I do not receive honor from men." (John 5:41) And John says, "24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." (John 2:24-25). Jesus knew what was in a man, and therefore received nothing from men. Paul says, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." And if the flesh cannot please God, how is it going to worship Him?

Somebody says, "Well then how are we supposed to worship God?" That's a great question! That's what we should have asked at the very beginning. That's what every new born Christian soul should cry out to the Lord. And when they do, they will hear His answer and understand it, "The hour has come when the true worshippers will worship Him in Spirit and truth! For the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth."

Friends, all worship without God's Spirit is idolatry. It is an image that man has made according

to his own imagination, in the form of something he has seen or dreamed. We live in a covenant where God's expectation is not just the pattern of Christ in outward symbols and testimonies. That covenant has past. It was already passing 2000 years ago when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. The hour has long since come when God only accepts the lifting up of the living Substance from the inward tabernacle of God. This is the true worship.

What does God accept as worship? He accepts the only thing He has ever accepted. And He rejects the same thing He has always rejected. **He accepts the sacrifice, offering, fragrance, glory, and increase of Christ, the one He has given to us.** He once accepted this worship in pictures, shadows, and outward testimonies with the Jews, and rejected all other outward forms. He now accepts this worship in Spirit and truth, rising up from the soul where Christ is received, revealed, formed and glorified.

As with all things, worship comes down before it can rise up. It is first given to the soul in the form of a Seed, a foreign and contrary life that must be revealed and formed within. Worship is Christ, His glory and perfection, His attributes, nature, and fragrance, increasing in the fertile land of the human soil, and ascending as a sweet smell to the Father. Man must receive this perfect gift before He has anything to offer the Father. And He must offer back the increase of what He has received. Like the parables of the talents or the minas, the servant must receive a measure and offer back to the Master it's increase.

It is like Hannah and the boy Samuel. Remember this story in the beginning of 1 Samuel? Hannah has a barren womb, and she cries out to the Lord in bitterness and anguish of soul. The priest Eli sees her crying and thinks she is drunk, but when he realizes she is praying he says, "May the God of Israel grant your petition." The Lord then puts a seed in Hannah's womb, gives life to her dead womb. And Hannah becomes the land in which God's gift grows. She gives birth to this seed, cares for him, weans him, and gives him back to the Lord permanently. She gives Samuel back to the temple of God, to minister before Him all of his days.

But now, what is the worship that we generally see in the world? What have men invented in the darkness of the great apostasy? Again, it is a worship that comes from below. It starts in man, and tries to rise up to the heavens. It starts in man's ideas, giftings, songs, ceremonies, and emotions. The worship that man conceives and performs by nature is a worship in the first birth, in the flesh. It is the offering of Cain perfected, beautified, and presented on Sundays, over and over, year after year.

This worship has nothing to do with presenting the fragrance and glory of Christ back to His Father. It has nothing to do with His increase and kingdom in man. And because man feels no inward or

outward signs of God's acceptance, he testifies from below about how pleasing our worship is to God. We do not know the glory of Christ being formed in our soul, so we add our own glory to our buildings, our sound systems, our ceremonies, our programs, or our outfits. We do not know the Spirit's operation in the heart, cutting down Adam and exalting Christ. Instead, we present the hot zeal of our own soul, our own emotions and tears, with clapping and shouting and heart-wrenching melodies, or with somber liturgies and solemn assemblies.

Now let me say... I am not against songs in the church. I really am not. Sometimes my heart overflows with joy in the Lord and I start singing to Him. I think that singing can certainly be appropriate and good, and moved of the Spirit...as Paul says, "singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord." But let me suggest this to you: Worship should already be happening in your soul long before the music starts, and long after it ends... or I doubt very much that it just "turns on" while you are singing. Worship should be a continual burning, like on the altar in Israel. It should be a continual fragrance, a perpetual arising of Christ revealed, formed, and glorified in His new tabernacle.

SESSION 4

The True Love of God

Here is another thing that has been sadly dropped and lost during the great night of apostasy. Men have proposed so many different objectives for knowing the Lord. I mean, there are so many different reasons why we are told we should believe and obey the gospel. There are so many different goals, purposes, and pursuits that motivate hearts in Christian religion. But to actually be changed in nature so as to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, this is not usually among them. This does not make it into most churches vision statements, or onto most believer's personal priority lists. But consider these verses:

Mark 12:28 *Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no*

other commandment greater than these." 32 So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. 33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

1 Tim 1:5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

1 Cor 13: 1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing...13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1Jn 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

1Jn 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

1Pe 1:22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. ... 13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT

ADULTERY," "YOU SHALL NOT MURDER," "YOU SHALL NOT STEAL," "YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS," "YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

There are so many more verses like these. I read them to you because they are plain, straightforward, and generally ignored. I mean, they are not mysterious. They need no interpretation. They are not filled with parables or symbols. They just simply say what they say, which is more or less this: **love (which is the nature of God, and nothing that man is or can do in himself) is the great commandment and requirement of God. It is what He desires and requires to work in His new creation in Christ.**

This is said so plainly and strongly, that nothing could be more clear. Jesus calls it the greatest of all commandments. John says it is the very nature of God's being, and in us is the evidence that we have passed from death to life. Peter says it should be what remains when the heart has been purified by the Spirit. Paul not only says that it sums up all of the law and prophets, but he even says that somebody who has all faith, all gifting, and even gives their goods to the poor and their body to be burned, but has not love, is NOTHING.

This should give us pause, for a number of reasons. Reading these Scriptures, the first thing that should come to our heart is a question. "If this is the great commandment and requirement of God.... *do I know this love?*" "Have I learned to love like this?" Putting aside for a moment the issue of the *way* that this love works in us, just the question—do I love?—should be an enormous concern for us. Some other questions that might follow this one are, "Have I known this love to be the "goal" of the apostles' instruction (as Paul says)?" "Besides mere lip service, does the church today seem to be in a true pursuit of this love? Is that genuinely what we are after? Is it the proof of our knowing the Lord and our abiding in Him?"

I would say no, it is not. Love may be in our church bulletins and in our songs, but it's not often burning in our hearts and constraining the life that we live. Generally speaking, the church does not know love as the nature of Christ that reigns in our heart in the absence of flesh.

How can man love in this way? The answer to that question is clear in Scripture. Of himself he cannot, will not, and does not. The love that man knows in the first birth, in the flesh, is precisely the opposite of what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13. It is a selfish love, a love that seeks its own gain, a love that remembers wrongs, and takes things to itself. It is jealous, and controlling, needy, and insecure. Like all things of Adam, it is perverted by the lie, motivated by fear and greed

and lust and pride.

There is, however, a way that the soul of man can experience true love, and be governed by it. In other words, there is a way that the soul of man can keep the greatest commandment and requirement of God. What is that way? **The soul must be circumcised of the nature of flesh.** The soul must be crucified with Christ, bear about His dying, be conformed to His death, and have the foreskin of the first birth thrown at the Lord's feet. This is the way that was prescribed from the beginning.

***Deut 30:6** And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

In the flesh, man has great and lofty ideas about love. He has dreams about love and he makes great boasts about it. He writes books and makes movies about deep and selfless love. Love is in all of our songs, all of our stories, but it is not really in our hearts. True love is still out of our reach. We've all tasted shadows of it in the natural man, but we cannot really *do* it in that man. We cannot really love anything but self in the first birth. And so, to keep the commandment of God, that man has to be removed. For the love of God to become a reality, for the soul to keep the greatest commandment, the natural man must be crucified by the cross of Christ.

God's love reigns in the believer's soul in the absence of flesh. And what is that love? It is a nature that man does not naturally possess. It is the thing that faith sees and hope expects, and so it is greater than them both. **It is a sweet, and meek, but powerful river that starts in God and runs through the soul, thinking nothing of self, but pouring out life wherever it goes.** It keeps nothing for itself, but never loses anything. It thinks nothing of itself, but finds true gain in the true good and growth of others. It lays down its life, willing to spend and be spent for souls.

This love was once a reality for many, and at least was a real goal or expectation for others in the original church. Paul said "the love of Christ constrains me". He spoke to the Ephesians about "the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." He prayed for the Philippians that "their love would abound still more and more." He said that the Colossian's "love in the Spirit" for all the saints was well known to all.

But what is the love that we find now in church? What is our love for our neighbor? Is it the nature of Christ that reigns in the soul where flesh has been crucified? Or is it a superficial bond in the flesh rooted in common interests, common personalities, similar ages of kids, etc.? Is it primarily a kind of politeness, or an outward friendliness, or a fickle and fragile friendship with

people that we see once a week? And is our love for God constraining all of our decisions, relationships, activities, and pursuits in this world? Or is it just an emotion that we sometimes feel when we sing the right song, or remember that we don't have to go to hell?

Again, I suggest to you that there has been a great falling away, a great apostasy, from “the love that God has poured out in our hearts by the Spirit He has given us.”

The Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is another pillar of the true church of God that has been lost in the church which man has built from below. Far from knowing and experiencing this reality, it has been my experience that it is rarely even talked about. Consider these verses:

2Co 5:11 *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

Rom 11:22 *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*

Luke 12:4 *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!*

Matt 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

Isa 2:10 *Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty. 11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up— And it shall be brought low... 17 The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, 18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish. 19 They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the*

earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily. 20 In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver And his idols of gold, Which they made, each for himself to worship, To the moles and bats, 21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, And into the crags of the rugged rocks, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily. 22 Sever yourselves from such a man, Whose breath is in his nostrils; For of what account is he?

Anyone who has ever truly seen the Lord, even in the shadows and visions of the old covenant, has trembled and fallen on the ground like a dead man. Even the most holy of men, the greatest followers of the Light, have been terrified by the greatness, perfection, power, reality, and purity of God when they have seen Him.

Israel could not bear to even hear His voice coming from the burning mountain. Like man others who had encountered the Lord, they immediately assumed that His presence would kill them, and begged Moses to act as mediator. The righteous prophets were undone at the sight of the Lord. They became weak, fell to the ground, and cried out against their own sin, and the sin of their people. "Woe is me, for I am undone" said Isaiah, "Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips!" Speaking of a vision, Daniel says, "So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face." And after the encounter Daniel said, "I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days... I was astonished by the vision." And when only the *hand* of the Lord appeared to write on the wall, it says of the King of Babylon that "his countenance changed, his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other." And Job's words are incredible. We read them before in a previous session, but let me read them again.

Job 32:1 *Then Job answered the LORD and said: 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."*

Even John the Apostle, who had walked with Jesus for three years, and surely known the power of His life and light for decades, fell as one dead when the glorified Lord appeared.

However, generally speaking, professing Christians now live in a state of complete *spiritual numbness*, in which they are not simply able to fear the Lord. They cannot fear Him because they cannot see Him, and do not know Him. He is an idea in their head, among thousands of other

ideas. And sadly, there are multitudes of things in their hearts that are much bigger than their view of the Lord.

There is a thick layer of fat (figuratively speaking) over most of our hearts that keeps us from feeling what these men felt, and what all should feel in a true sight of the Lord. There is a veil over our eyes, even as Christians, that keeps our knees from knocking together and our hearts from crying out because of “the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty.” That veil parted slightly at least once, when we received the testimony of Christ and cried out for forgiveness, or life, or however it was when we were born of the Spirit. At least once in our lives, most of us have felt a taste of His greatness, have seen a glimpse of the One we should fear. But has that veil continued to open? Has the presence of the Almighty in the midst of the camp caused us to live in the fear of the Lord? Generally no... because again, we do not truly see Him or know Him.

But this was not so in the beginning. The apostle's said, “knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men!” The fear of the Lord is what kept them clean. It was their wisdom during their short time in earthly tents. They knew that “whatever they had spoken in the dark would be heard in the light, and what was whispered in the ear in the inner room would be proclaimed on the housetops.” They knew that they would give an account for all the deeds done in the body, whether they were Adam or Christ, whether they were the works of the flesh done in the dark, or the works of Christ wrought in the light.

It wasn't about dead doctrines and creeds and ceremonies and traditions for them. Christianity was about a living, reigning, resurrected King that would put all enemies under His feet. And they understood that a man's enemies were in his own household. I mean, they were in himself... they were in the land that God had purchased. The enemies of God are the things in us, the strongholds, high places, and fleshly idols that obstruct His kingdom. And because they saw this to be true, they bowed very low.

The apostles understood that, sooner or later, all things would have to reckon with the light of the Lord, the eternal and perfect Day of our God. They saw that all things must **must eventually confront, recognize, and align with God's perfect truth. What I mean is that God's view of all things, whether we can see it or whether we agree with it, will ultimately be the only thing that remains, the only thing that matters.** God's perspective isn't His opinion, its the eternal substance of objective reality.

The Day of the Lord that all men must face is just a confrontation with God's view. He knows all things as they truly are, and He will make all men face that view. Do you see? All other thoughts, all contrary things are simply not the truth, and they will eventually give way to HIS view. One day

(the Day of the Lord) God's perspective will be the only thing left.

In a sense, it is already that way. From God's vantage point, all things are obvious and clear, and man's opinions and blindness and numbness doesn't change anything. The question for us is whether we are willing to fear the Lord, and walk in His light. Will we walk in that eternal perspective, to live in what He sees, and let our hearts lose EVERYTHING that He does not see or regard? Or will we close our eyes, follow vanity, and become vain.

Friends, whatever you or I may think about God, about life, about purpose, about church, family, Scripture, Christianity, etc.... none of it is even remotely relevant unless our view is the sharing of His view. Unless our perspective is the unfolding of His light. Do you ever think about that? You should? Seriously considering these things might allow the veil to crack again and some of the fat to fall off your hearts. Do you ever wonder how many of your ideas, emotions, plans, definitions, interpretations, thoughts, loves, purposes, etc. don't even exist in His light? One day, friends, these things will not exist in you either, no matter how much time, sweat, and tears have been given to them during your short stay on earth.

To me, that is something of the fear of the Lord. It is the awareness that only God's perspective and assessment and judgment and view will remain. And I'd better (if I know what's good for me) come to see as He sees and know as He knows, because everything else is a complete LIE. His view is light, and all other views are darkness. Nothing will ever change that.

I believe this is why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is the beginning of wisdom because it is the beginning of God's perspective. Without the fear of the Lord growing in my soul, any idea can make sense in my mind. Without the fear of the Lord, any desires, pursuit, goal, identity, purpose, activity, understanding, ANYTHING can make as much sense to me as anything else. But the fear of the Lord changes this. It kills and nullifies all things that are not according to His view.

Now I ask you, does the church today fear the Lord? Or have we fallen from this fear? Is it yet another thing that has been lost in the long night of apostasy that has overtaken the earth. Are Christians truly afraid of their own opinions and interpretations. Do Christians approach Scripture with a God-given dread of adding their own meanings or taking away His? Are we afraid to stain His truth with our own darkened understanding. Are we terrified of acting in His name when we do not bear His nature or walk in His light?

Or do we confidently assert our interpretations, and eagerly teach our wisdom from below. Do we bring our own ideas to His words, and from the two make an unholy union, a horrible mixture

of two seeds? Do we quickly take titles and roles to ourselves, and names like teacher, prophet, worship leader, evangelist, and pastor.

Again, there is a thick, cold, numb layer of fat over our hearts, and, generally speaking, we CANNOT fear the Lord. We cannot fear Him because we do not know Him or see Him. And this is a terrible and dangerous thing. This is yet another fruit of the great apostasy from true Christianity.