

A FALLING AWAY FIRST

IMAGE OF THE BEAST 508 – 538

“But what is the ‘image to the beast’? and how is it to be formed? The image is made by the two-horned beast, and is an image to the beast. It is also called an image of the beast. Then to learn what the image is like and how it is to be formed we must study the characteristics of the beast itself--the papacy.

“When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs, she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of ‘heresy.’ In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends.

“Whenever the church has obtained secular power, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines. Protestant churches that have followed in the steps of Rome by forming alliance with worldly powers have manifested a similar desire to restrict liberty of conscience. An example of this is given in the long-continued persecution of dissenters by the Church of England. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thousands of nonconformist ministers were forced to flee from their churches, and many, both of pastors and people, were subjected to fine, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom.

“It was apostasy that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy--the beast. Said Paul: ‘There’ shall ‘come a falling away, . . . and that man of sin be revealed.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:3. So apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast.” *The Great Controversy*, 443.

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JUDAS

2 Timothy 3:5

“Notwithstanding the Saviour's own teaching, **Judas was continually advancing the idea that Christ would reign as king in Jerusalem.** [THEOCRACY] At the feeding of the five thousand he tried to bring this about. On this occasion Judas assisted in distributing the food to the hungry multitude. He had an opportunity to see the benefit which it was in his power to impart to others. He felt the satisfaction that always comes in service to God. He helped to bring the sick and suffering from among the multitude to Christ. He saw what relief, what joy and gladness, come to human hearts through the healing power of the Restorer. He might have comprehended the methods of Christ. But he was blinded by his own selfish desires. Judas was first to take advantage of the enthusiasm excited by the miracle of the loaves. **It was he who set on foot the project to take Christ by force and make Him king.** His hopes were high. His disappointment was bitter.” *Desire of Ages*, 718.

“In surprise and confusion at the exposure of his purpose, Judas rose hastily to leave the room. ‘Then said Jesus unto him, **That thou doest, do quickly.** . . . **He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.**’ Night it was to the traitor as he turned away from Christ into the outer darkness.

“ **Until this step was taken,** Judas had not passed beyond the possibility of repentance. But when he left the presence of his Lord and his fellow disciples, the final decision had been made. **He had passed the boundary line.**

“Wonderful had been the long-suffering of Jesus in His dealing with this tempted soul. Nothing that could be done to save Judas had been left undone. **After he had twice covenanted to betray his Lord,** Jesus still gave him opportunity for repentance. By reading the secret purpose of the traitor's heart, Christ gave to Judas the final, convincing evidence of His divinity. This was to the false disciple the last call to repentance. No appeal that the divine-human heart of Christ could make had been spared. The waves of mercy, beaten back by stubborn pride, returned in a stronger tide of subduing love. But although surprised and alarmed at the discovery of his guilt, Judas became only the more determined. **From the sacramental supper he went out to complete the work of betrayal.**

“**In pronouncing the woe upon Judas, Christ also had a purpose of mercy toward His disciples.** He thus gave them the crowning evidence of His Messiahship. ‘**I tell you before it come,**’ He said, ‘**that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I AM.**’ Had Jesus remained silent, in apparent ignorance of what was to come upon Him, the disciples might have thought that their Master had not divine foresight, and had been surprised and betrayed into the hands of the murderous mob. A year before, Jesus had told the disciples that He had chosen twelve, and that one was a devil. Now His words to Judas, showing that his treachery was fully known to his Master, would strengthen the faith of Christ's true followers during His humiliation. And when Judas should have come to his dreadful end, they would remember the woe that Jesus had pronounced upon the betrayer.” *Desire of Ages*, 654, 655.

COVENANT OF THE WICKED

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“These three kings, **in originating, re-affirming, and completing the decree**, brought it to the perfection required by the prophecy to mark the beginning of the 2300 years.” *The Great Controversy* 1888, 326.

Isaiah 28:15 Because ye have said, We have **made a covenant with death**, and **with hell are we at agreement**; **when** the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made **lies our refuge**, and under falsehood have we **hid ourselves**:

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for **a foundation a stone**, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isaiah 28:17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

Isaiah 28:18 And **your covenant with death shall be disannulled**, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

THE NEW COVENANT

1 Corinthians 11:23 - 26

“In partaking with His disciples of the bread and wine, Christ pledged Himself to them as their Redeemer. **He committed to them the new covenant**, by which all who receive Him become children of God, and joint heirs with Christ. By this covenant every blessing that heaven could bestow for this life and the life to come was theirs. This covenant deed was to be ratified with the blood of Christ. And the administration of the Sacrament was to keep before the disciples the infinite sacrifice made for each of them individually as a part of the great whole of fallen humanity.” *Desire of Ages*, 656.

“The atoning sacrifice is full and sufficient. **It is the new covenant**, sealed with His blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins. **This Christ declared at the last supper**. In this cup there is to those who drink in faith, peace-making, soul-cleansing efficacy. It is the balm of Gilead, which God has provided to restore health and soundness to the sin-stricken soul (Letter 108, 1899)”. *SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 5, 1102.

JOHN 6:66 & EZEKIEL 8:1

John 6:66

“**When Christ forbade the people to declare Him king**, He knew that **a turning point in His history was reached**. Multitudes who **desired to exalt Him to the throne** today would turn

from Him tomorrow. **The disappointment of their selfish ambition would turn their love to hatred**, and their praise to curses. Yet knowing this, He took no measures to avert the crisis. From the first He had held out to His followers no hope of earthly rewards. To one who came desiring to become His disciple He had said, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.' Matthew 8:20. If men could have had the world with Christ, multitudes would have proffered Him their allegiance; but such service He could not accept. Of those now connected with Him **there were many who had been attracted by the hope of a worldly kingdom**. These must be undeceived. The deep spiritual teaching in the miracle of the loaves had not been comprehended. This was to be made plain. And **this new revelation would bring with it a closer test**.

"But the people did not choose to receive this statement of divine truth. Jesus had done the very work which prophecy had foretold that the Messiah would do; but they had not witnessed what their selfish hopes had pictured as His work. Christ had indeed once fed the multitude with barley loaves; but in the days of Moses Israel had been fed with manna forty years, and far greater blessings were expected from the Messiah. Their dissatisfied hearts queried why, if Jesus could perform so many wondrous works as they had witnessed, **could He not give health, strength, and riches to all His people, free them from their oppressors, and exalt them to power and honor?** The fact that He claimed to be the Sent of God, and yet refused to be Israel's king, was a mystery which they could not fathom. His refusal was misinterpreted. Many concluded that He dared not assert His claims because He Himself doubted as to the divine character of His mission. Thus they opened their hearts to unbelief, and the seed which Satan had sown bore fruit of its kind, in misunderstanding and defection.

"**The test was too great**. The enthusiasm of those who had sought to **take Him by force and make Him king grew cold**. This discourse in the synagogue, they declared, had opened their eyes. Now they were undeceived. In their minds His words were a direct confession that He was not the Messiah, and that no earthly rewards were to be realized from connection with Him. They had welcomed His miracle-working power; **they were eager to be freed from disease and suffering**; but they would not come into sympathy with His self-sacrificing life. They cared not for the **mysterious spiritual kingdom [SEDITION/SECRET SOCIETY]** of which He spoke. The insincere, the selfish, who had sought Him, no longer desired Him. If He would not devote His power and influence to obtaining their **freedom from the Romans**, they would have nothing to do with Him.

"**As those disaffected disciples turned away from Christ, a different spirit took control of them**. They **could see nothing attractive in Him** whom they had once found so interesting. **They sought out His enemies**, for they were in harmony with their spirit and work. They misinterpreted His words, falsified His statements, and impugned His motives. They sustained their course by gathering up every item that could be turned against Him; and such indignation was stirred up by these false reports that His life was in danger. *Desire of Ages*, 381 – 392.

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY CH. 38 – THE FINAL WARNING

"**As the storm approaches**, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but **have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition**. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, **employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls**. They **become the most bitter enemies of**

their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, **these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan** to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.” *The Great Controversy*, 608.

“Many of the words and acts of Jesus appear mysterious to finite minds, but every word and act had its definite purpose in the work for our redemption; each was **calculated to produce its own result**. If we were capable of understanding His purposes, all would appear important, complete, and in harmony with His mission.

“When Jesus presented the testing truth that caused so many of His disciples to turn back, **He knew what would be the result of His words**; but **He had a purpose of mercy to fulfill**. He foresaw that **in the hour of temptation** every one of His beloved disciples would be severely tested. His agony in Gethsemane, His betrayal and crucifixion, would be to them a most trying ordeal. Had no previous test been given, **many who were actuated by merely selfish motives would have been connected with them**. When their Lord was condemned in the judgment hall; when the multitude who had hailed Him as their king hissed at Him and reviled Him; when the jeering crowd cried, ‘Crucify Him!’--when their worldly ambitions were disappointed, **these self-seeking ones would, by renouncing their allegiance to Jesus, have brought upon the disciples a bitter, heart-burdening sorrow, in addition to their grief and disappointment in the ruin of their fondest hopes**. In that hour of darkness, the example of those who turned from Him might have carried others with them. But Jesus brought about this crisis while by His personal presence He could still strengthen the faith of His true followers.

“Compassionate Redeemer, who **in the full knowledge of the doom that awaited Him, tenderly smoothed the way for the disciples, prepared them for their crowning trial**, and strengthened them for **the final test!**” *Desire of Ages*, 393, 394.

APRIL 19TH

“I saw the people of God joyful in expectation, looking for their Lord. But **God designed to prove them. His hand covered a mistake in the reckoning of the prophetic periods**. Those who were looking for their Lord did not discover this mistake, and the most learned men who opposed the time also failed to see it. **God designed that His people should meet with a disappointment**. The time passed, and those who had looked with joyful expectation for their Saviour were sad and disheartened, while those who had not loved the appearing of Jesus, but **embraced the message through fear, were pleased that He did not come at the time of expectation**. Their profession had not affected the heart and purified the life. **The passing of the time was well calculated to reveal such hearts**. They were **the first to turn and ridicule the sorrowful, disappointed ones** who really loved the appearing of their Saviour. I saw the wisdom of God in proving His people and giving them a searching test to discover those who would shrink and turn back in the hour of trial.

“Jesus and all the heavenly host looked with sympathy and love upon those who had with sweet expectation longed to see Him whom their souls loved. Angels were hovering around them, to sustain them in the hour of their trial. Those who had neglected to receive the heavenly message were **left in darkness**, and **God's anger was kindled against them**, because they would not receive the light which He had sent them from heaven. Those faithful, disappointed ones, who could not understand why their Lord did not come, were not left in darkness. Again they were led to their Bibles to search the prophetic periods. The hand of the Lord was removed from the figures, and the mistake was explained. They saw that the prophetic periods reached to 1844, and

that the same evidence which they had presented to show that the prophetic periods closed in 1843, proved that they would terminate in 1844. Light from the Word of God shone upon their position, and they discovered a tarrying time--'Though it [the vision] tarry, wait for it.' In their love for Christ's immediate coming, they had overlooked the tarrying of the vision, **which was calculated to manifest the true waiting ones.** Again they had a point of time. Yet I saw that many of them could not rise above their severe disappointment to possess that degree of zeal and energy which had marked their faith in 1843.

"Satan and his angels triumphed over them, and those who would not receive the message **congratulated themselves upon their farseeing judgment and wisdom in not receiving the delusion,** as they called it. They did not realize that they were rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, and **were working in union with Satan and his angels to perplex God's people,** who were living out the heaven-sent message." *Early Writings*, 235, 236.

THE PASSOVER SUPPER

Leviticus 23:5 In the fourteenth day of the first month **at even** is the LORD'S passover.

THE SUNSET GATE

"In the time of Christ the people of Palestine lived in walled towns, which were mostly situated upon hills or mountains. **The gates, which were closed at sunset,** were approached by steep, rocky roads, and the traveler journeying homeward at the close of the day often had to press his way in eager haste up the difficult ascent in order to reach the gate before nightfall. **The loiterer was left without.**

"The narrow, upward road leading to home and rest furnished Jesus with an impressive figure of the Christian way. The path which I have set before you, He said, is narrow; the gate is difficult of entrance; for the golden rule excludes all pride and self-seeking. There is, indeed, a wider road; but its end is destruction. If you would climb the path of spiritual life, you must constantly ascend; for it is an upward way. You must go with the few; for the multitude will choose the downward path.

"In the road to death the whole race may go, with all their worldliness, all their selfishness, all their pride, dishonesty, and moral debasement. There is room for every man's opinions and doctrines, space to follow his inclinations, to do whatever his self-love may dictate. In order to go in the path that leads to destruction, there is no need of searching for the way; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad, and the feet naturally turn into the path that ends in death.

"But the way to life is narrow and the entrance strait. If you cling to any besetting sin you will find the way too narrow for you to enter. Your own ways, your own will, your evil habits and practices, must be given up if you would keep the way of the Lord. He who would serve Christ cannot follow the world's opinions or meet the world's standard. Heaven's path is too narrow for rank and riches to ride in state, too narrow for the play of self-centered ambition, too steep and rugged for lovers of ease to climb. Toil, patience, self-sacrifice, reproach, poverty, the contradiction of sinners against Himself, was the portion of Christ, and it must be our portion, if we ever enter the Paradise of God.

"Yet do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. It is true that Satan's path is made to appear attractive, but it is all a deception; in the way of evil there are bitter remorse and cankering care.

We may think it pleasant to follow pride and worldly ambition, but the end is pain and sorrow. Selfish plans may present flattering promises and hold out the hope of enjoyment, but we shall find that our happiness is poisoned and our life embittered by hopes that center in self. In the downward road the gateway may be bright with flowers, but thorns are in the path. The light of hope which shines from its entrance fades into the darkness of despair, and the soul who follows that path descends into the shadows of unending night.

“‘The way of transgressors is hard,’ but wisdom’s ‘ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.’ Proverbs 13:15; 3:17. Every act of obedience to Christ, every act of self-denial for His sake, every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory. If we take Christ for our guide, He will lead us safely. The veriest sinner need not miss his way. Not one trembling seeker need fail of walking in pure and holy light. Though the path is so narrow, so holy that sin cannot be tolerated therein, yet access has been secured for all, and not one doubting, trembling soul need say, ‘God cares nought for me.’

“The road may be rough and the ascent steep; there may be pitfalls upon the right hand and upon the left; we may have to endure toil in our journey; when weary, when longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; when discouraged, we must still hope; but with Christ as our guide we shall not fail of reaching the desired haven at last. Christ Himself has trodden the rough way before us and has smoothed the path for our feet.

“And all the way up the steep road leading to eternal life are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary. Those who walk in wisdom’s ways are, even in tribulation, exceeding joyful; for He whom their soul loveth, walks, invisible, beside them. At each upward step they discern more distinctly the touch of His hand; at every step brighter gleamings of glory from the Unseen fall upon their path; and their songs of praise, reaching ever a higher note, ascend to join the songs of angels before the throne. ‘The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ Proverbs 4:18, R.V., margin.” *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, 138 -140.

Nehemiah 13:16 - 19

John 9:4

GETHSEMANE

“The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest as the conflict drew to its close. Satan and his confederacy of evil, the legions of apostasy, watched intently this great crisis in the work of redemption. The powers of good and evil waited to see what answer would come to Christ’s **thrice-repeated prayer**. Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine sufferer, but this might not be. No way of escape was found for the Son of God. In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, **and the mighty angel who stands in God’s presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ**. The angel came not to take the cup from Christ’s hand, but **to strengthen Him to drink it**, with the assurance of the Father’s love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that

the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved.

“Christ’s agony did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him. **The storm had in nowise abated, but He who was its object was strengthened to meet its fury.** He came forth calm and serene. A heavenly peace rested upon His bloodstained face. He had borne that which no human being could ever bear; for **He had tasted the sufferings of death for every man.**

“**The sleeping disciples had been suddenly awakened by the light surrounding the Saviour.** They saw the angel bending over their prostrate Master. They saw him lift the Saviour’s head upon his bosom, and point toward heaven. They heard his voice, like sweetest music, speaking words of comfort and hope. The disciples recalled the scene upon the **mount of transfiguration.** They remembered the glory that in the temple had encircled Jesus, and the voice of God that spoke from the cloud. **Now that same glory was again revealed,** and they had no further fear for their Master. He was under the care of God; a mighty angel had been sent to protect Him. Again the disciples in their weariness yield to the strange stupor that overpowers them. Again Jesus finds them sleeping.

“Looking sorrowfully upon them He says, ‘Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.’

“Even as He spoke these words, He heard the footsteps of the mob in search of Him, and said, ‘Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.’

“No traces of His recent agony were visible as Jesus stepped forth to meet His betrayer. Standing in advance of His disciples He said, ‘Whom seek ye?’ They answered, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus replied, ‘I am He.’ As these words were spoken, the angel who had lately ministered to Jesus moved between Him and the mob. **A divine light illuminated the Saviour’s face, and a dovelike form overshadowed Him.** In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, **fell as dead men to the ground.**” *Desire of Ages*, 693, 694.

THE TOMB

“**At sight of the angels and the glorified Saviour the Roman guard had fainted and become as dead men.** When the heavenly train was hidden from their view, they arose to their feet, and as quickly as their trembling limbs could carry them, made their way to the gate of the garden. Staggering like drunken men, they hurried on to the city, telling those whom they met the wonderful news. They were making their way to Pilate, but their report had been carried to the Jewish authorities, and the chief priests and rulers sent for them to be brought first into their presence. A strange appearance those soldiers presented. Trembling with fear, their faces colorless, they bore testimony to the resurrection of Christ. The soldiers told all, just as they had seen it; they had not had time to think or speak anything but the truth. With painful utterance they said, It was the Son of God who was crucified; we have heard an angel proclaiming Him as the Majesty of heaven, the King of glory.” *Desire of Ages*, 781.