

The Great Apostasy and the Perfect Storm!

What happened to the original church Christ built? How did apostasy rear its ugly head and take over the mainstream churches? Where is the apostasy leading? What about the weekly Sabbath? Does a “perfect storm” of Great Tribulation lie ahead?

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Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary declares, “The Church of Christ was considered an *enclosure*; a *field* or *vineyard*, well hedged or walled. Those who were not members of the church, were considered without—that is, not under that special defense and protection which the true followers of Christ had. Being a Christian was essential to the salvation of the soul, so being in the Church of Christ was essential to being a Christian: therefore, it was concluded there was no salvation outside of the Church. Now this is true in all places where the doctrines of Christianity are preached; but when one description of people professing Christianity, with their own peculiar mode of worship and creed, arrogate to themselves, *exclusive of all others*, the title of *The Church* and that there is no church besides (on that premise), *then* you must be one of them, believe as they believe, and worship as they worship, or you will be infallibly damned; I say, *when this is asserted*, every man who feels he has an immortal spirit is called on to examine the pretensions of such spiritual monopolists. Now, as the church of Christ is formed on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone, the doctrines of this Christian Church must be sought for in the sacred Scriptures; the Bible alone must decide.”

Do we do like the Bereans did and search the scriptures daily to ascertain the truth.? (Act 17:11).

Clarke continues. “The church, which has been so hasty to condemn all others by its own self-constituted authority, to make itself the determiner of the fates of men dealing out the mansions of glory to its partisans, and the abodes of endless miseries to all those who are out of its antichristian and inhuman enclosure has been brought to this standard; and is proved by the Scriptures to be fallen from the faith of God’s elect, and to be most awfully and dangerously corrupt. Those within its influence endanger their

salvation. Yet, even in it many sincere and upright persons may be found, who in spirit and practice, belong to the true Church of Christ.”

If you belong to an “exclusive” church like that one, you better watch out for your salvation, it is endangered by such self-righteous teaching. The true Church of God is a *spiritual* organization. Not an “incorporated” body of men with human leadership!

The Perfect Storm

I ordered a booklet called *The Perfect Storm is Coming!* Apparently it is from a breakaway Seventh Day Adventist ministry and the booklet is simplified and adapted from *The Great Controversy*, a nineteenth century Christian classic by E. G. White. I am not against E. G. White; who was one of the early leaders of the S.D.A. Church. Some things she wrote were very good, even though she made mistakes. Printed on its cover is, “War, Economic Collapse and Moral Decay – Is America Headed for Armageddon?”

Page three quotes E.G. White: “A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Thinking men and women have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity taking possession of every earthly element, and recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.”

Those words make a very provocative beginning. The booklet covers some of the outline of prophecies, and signs of the end times that Jesus told us to be watching out for in **Matthew 24**. These are signs that will be rampant on the earth immediately before His second coming. So it caught my attention and I have read what it had to say. It warns: “Let men beware lest they neglect the lesson conveyed to them in the words of Christ. As He warned His disciples of Jerusalem’s destruction, giving them a sign of the approaching ruin, that they might escape, so He has warned the world of the day of final destruction, and has given men tokens of its approach, that all that will may flee from the wrath to come.” Are we striving with God’s help to flee from the wrath to come?

Beginning of Persecution and Apostasy

In the first century a great number of Christians were burned alive, thrown to wild beasts in Roman amphitheaters as crowds looked on in fiendish delight saying “death to the Christians”. This booklet points out that the people did not want to suffer persecution, death and martyrdom and many compromises began to be made. In the days of Emperor Constantine in the early part of the fourth century, he claimed to be a Christian and converted to Christianity and passed an edict of toleration of Christianity in the Roman Empire. At this time to compromise with pagan Rome, the devil raised up new leaders to lead a perversion of Christianity. “Instead of having the ‘humble simplicity of Christ’ and the apostles, it was replaced by the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers. In place of the requirements of God, Rome substituted human theories and traditions.” When the Roman Emperor Constantine “converted” to Christianity, many people rejoiced; and “the world, cloaked with a form or righteousness, marched into the church. Now the work of

corruption progressed rapidly. Paganism became the conqueror. The paganism spirit, doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of Christians. A union was formed between Christianity and paganism primarily emanating from Rome itself. False doctrines, superstitious rites, and idolatrous ceremonies were soon incorporated into Christian faith and worship.”

Sunday and the Sabbath

“In 321 A.D., the Roman Emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public festival throughout the Empire. The ‘day of the sun’ was already revered by his subjects and soon began being honored by ‘Christians’: “it was the Emperor’s policy to unite the conflicting interests of heathenism and Christianity” to create ecumenical union merging all the faiths into one. There is a big movement in the world today to do the same thing.

“The Biblical Sabbath which God blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2:2-3) was set aside. In its stead the festival observed by the heathen as ‘the venerable day of the sun’: was exalted. That the attention of the people might be called to the “Sun” day, it was made a festival (by the Roman Catholic Church) in honor of the resurrection of Christ. Nowhere in scriptures are we authorized to observe Sunday as a weekly day of rest or worship. It is purely a Roman Catholic ‘dispensation’ (doctrine) instituted by Satan the devil to lead people into paganism disguised as Christianity. “That was a time of deep anguish for the faithful followers of Christ. Wearing the cloak of pretended Christianity, Satan artfully insinuated himself into the church, corrupting faith. In time, most Christians consented to lower their standard.”

“Even in her best estate, the church was not composed entirely of the true, pure, and sincere. It required a desperate struggle for those who would remain faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations being introduced into the church.”

The same thing happened in the Worldwide Church of God at the death of Herbert Armstrong. His successors introduced deceptions and abominations into the church and the whole church went along with these until it got so bad the Sabbath was rejected and meetings were being held on Sunday with the approval of Christmas and Easter and finally the church split. Out of it came the United Church and others. But they just came out of it and continued following the traditions of H.W. Armstrong, right or wrong. The leaders did not get back to the faith once delivered to the saints and follow what the apostle Jude said in **Jude 1:3** (get back to the faith once delivered to the saints) and search the scriptures for solid truth.

“The early church was induced to yield allegiance to the bishop of Rome. Roman emperors, claiming to be gods, now exchanged roles with Roman prelates.” The new pope claimed to be God in the flesh, (God on the earth in the place of Christ). And a

leading doctrine of Romanism was adopted; declaring that the pope is the visible head of the universal church of Christ and is invested with supreme authority over bishops and pastors in all parts of the world. Some of the blasphemous things that were said by the Catholic Church were unbelievable! “To provide converts from heathenism a substitute for their worship of idols, and promote their minimal acceptance of Christianity, the adoration of images and relics was gradually introduced into Christian worship. The decree of a general council (Second Council of Nice, A.D. 787) finally established this system of idolatry.”

“The early Roman Catholic Church presumed to erase the second commandment from the law of God, which forbids worship of images and divided the tenth commandment (thou shall not covet) into two commandments in order to preserve the number (*ten*). Thus the ninth commandment says thou shall not covet and tenth commandment, thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife or possessions belonging to your neighbor. This early compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in a gigantic system of false religion foreshadowing Satan’s final efforts to seat himself upon the throne and rule the earth according to his will.”

“The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased, darkness deepened and descended upon the nations of the west. The very titles of Deity were claimed for the pope. He styled himself ‘Lord God the Pope,’ *assumed infallibility*, and demanded that all men pay him homage.” Faith was transferred from Christ the true foundation to believing in the Pope of Rome. Instead of trusting in and asking God for the forgiveness of sins for eternal salvation, the people were instructed to look to the pope and his priests to whom he delegated authority. The people were taught to make their confessions to their priests instead of to God through Christ in prayer. The people were taught that the pope was their earthly mediator, and none could approach God except through the papacy. People *came to believe that the pope stood in the place of God, and therefore was to be implicitly obeyed.*

Dark, Dark Ages

“Any deviation from the Pope’s exactions was sufficient cause for the severest punishment to be visited upon the bodies and souls of offenders. Through this error the people were turned from God to fallible, erring men. Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over church and state. The doctrine of papal supremacy is directly opposed to the teachings of Scripture. Christ said: Call no man your father (Pope, Papa, and Spiritual Father) upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.” Matthew 23:9. Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall you serve” Luke 4:8.

As a consequence, “for hundreds of years people were forbidden to read the Bible or to have it in their houses, while undisciplined priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions.” Adam Clarke described this “one and only church claim” which fenced in the sheep (followers) keeping them away from reading the Scriptures and salvation teaching perverted doctrines. See **Jude 1:1-4 (NIV)**. We need to *contend earnestly* by studying the Scriptures, praying over them as we study them. As I study the books of the Scriptures (as John, Jude, words of Christ, Apostle Paul, James), I can’t help but read those verses and pray over the verses— almost one by one—applying them to me, asking God to help me to walk worthy of the faith, and have my words seasoned with salt and redeem the time. I ask Him to give me more grace that I might know how to answer each person that they will listen and not be offended. I pray that God will help me to labor fervently for you in prayers as Epaphras did with great zeal. Colossians 4:12-- that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. I pray that we all will stand zealous for the word and truth of God.

“In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the machinations of the papacy—the Inquisition. In their secret councils, the minds of evil men invented tortures too horrible for human eyes to behold. The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried out to God for vengeance (Revelation 6).”

How Martin Luther came upon the scene.

Martin Luther was ignorant of the existence of the Bible until he discovered a Latin Bible in the university library one day and for the first time looked upon the whole of the word of God. In his deep desire for peace and to be free from sin, he devoted himself to a monastic life where he did his best to root sin out of his life with fasting, vigils, and scourging to subdue the evils of his nature. He was led to visit Rome to visit the seat of the Catholic Church, and he wondered at the wealth, magnificence and luxury that he witnessed.

The monks lived in splendid apartments, attired themselves in the richest and most costly robes, and feasted at sumptuous tables. He contrasted this scene with the self-denial and hardship of his own life. Today, many ministers also live high above the laymen in some churches, similar to the Catholic monks.

“Luther was a true son of the papal church, but everywhere he visited in the city he saw scenes that filled him with astonishment and revulsion. He saw that iniquity existed among all classes of the clergy. He was filled with horror at the indecent jokes and awful profanity of the prelates, even during mass. No one can imagine, he wrote, ‘what sins and infamous actions are committed in Rome; they must be seen and heard to be believed. Thus they are in the habit of saying, “If there is a hell, Rome is built over it: it is an abyss whence issues every kind of sin.”’”

“The Roman Church made merchandise of the grace of God. Under the plea of raising funds for the erection of St. Peter’s Church at Rome, indulgences for sin were publicly offered for sale by authority of the pope. By the price of crime a temple was to be built for God’s worship—the cornerstone was laid with the wages of iniquity. It was this heresy that aroused Luther and led to the battle which shook the papal throne. One of the great salesmen of the pope (appointed to conduct the sale of indulgences in Germany) was the German, Tetzal. Tetzal declared that by virtue of his certificates of pardon, all the sins which the purchaser should afterward desire to commit would be forgiven him, and that ‘not even repentance is necessary’. More than this, he assured his hearers that the indulgences had power *to save not only the living but the dead* (See K. R. Hagenbach, *History of the Reformation*, Vol. 1, p. 96).”

“Many in Luther’s congregation purchased certificates of pardon, and came to their pastor confessing their sins, and expecting absolution *on the ground of the indulgence, not because* they were penitent and wished to reform. Luther refused them absolution. They confronted Tetzal who was filled with rage and revenge when some boldly demanded that their money be returned and a division occurred. Luther nailed his 95 propositions against the doctrine of indulgences on the door of the Church of Wittenberg on All Saints Day (Halloween) which had many visitors on holy days. These propositions attracted universal attention, and were read and reread and repeated in every direction. His appeal was rapidly circulated throughout Germany, and exerted a powerful influence upon the people. Luther was threatened with excommunication if he did not recant, but Luther would not recant—the pope was wrong. After a terrible struggle, Luther decided upon final separation from the Roman Catholic Church; thus began the contest between Scripture and the traditions of men; between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.”

Just as the pope excommunicated Martin Luther, the Worldwide Church of God in 1987 offered me absolution if I would crawl back on my hands and knees before the ministry and recant of publishing books. When I would not recant, they put me out of the church and marked me so that members were not allowed to associate or talk to me. Where is the real heresy, brethren? We of the truth of God, let’s love it and hold fast and not deny it, nor allow ourselves to be separated from the truth of God.

The Impending Conflict

Psalms 119:89—“Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” Matthew 5:18—Christ said: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. “ Psalms 111:7-8— “the works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.”

SATAN rejects the law of God, and his ministers cast aside the law of God, but the results will ultimately be the same. James 2:10—“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” The man who offends in one point manifests contempt for the whole law (and God himself the author of His law) and he becomes ‘guilty of all’.

Continuing from *The Perfect Storm*, pg.48—“The great deceiver has cast contempt upon the divine statutes. The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long standing controversy concerning the law of God. Upon this battle we are now entering—a battle between the laws of men and the precepts of God, between the religion of the Bible and the religion of fable and tradition (of men).”

God’s appointed holy days and how to calculate and when to keep them are important because all the commandments stand together. The Adventists keep the weekly Sabbath day, but reject the eternal foundational everlasting festivals of the annual holy days. Almighty God is held in contempt by the person who knows and does not keep God’s law.

“Too many ministers are teaching their people, and too many professors and teachers are instructing their students, that the law of God has been changed or abrogated; and that those who regard its requirements as still valid and to be literally obeyed, deserve only ridicule or contempt.”

The SDA’s may be condemning themselves, by not keeping the annual holy days. 1 John 3:4—“Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

“Wherever the divine precepts are rejected, sin ceases to appear sinful, or righteousness desirable. Already the doctrine that men are released from obedience to God’s requirements has weakened the force of moral obligation, and opened the floodgates of iniquity.” This is the world that we see around us today.

“Lawlessness, intemperance, and corruption are sweeping in upon us like an overwhelming tide. In the family, Satan is at work. His banner waves, even in professedly Christian households. The line of distinction between professed Christians and the ungodly is now hardly distinguishable. Church members love what the world loves.”

Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law, and men are henceforth free from its requirements. There are some who represent the law as a grievous yoke, and in contrast to the bondage of the law, they present the liberty to be enjoyed under the gospel (freedom to live and do as you please). But the prophets and apostles do not agree with this assertion regarding the Law of God. **James 2:8, 1:25**--- refers to God’s law as the ‘royal law,’ and the ‘perfect law of liberty’. Revelation

22:14—pronounces a blessing on those “that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Isaiah 42:21--Christ came to make God’s law manifest (magnify the law)—“the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable.” Matthew 5:17—“Think not that I came to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

In Revelation 14 –herein are the redeemed from among men (without fault) being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Angel 1—flies in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to all that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. “Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters”.

Ecclesiastes 12:13—“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”

Angel 2 follows angel #1 saying: “Babylon (world’s false religious system) is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication (spiritual adultery).”

Angel 3 follows angel #2 saying: IF any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Here IS the PATIENCE (steadfastness) of the saints: here are they that KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF God and the FAITH of Jesus.” These are the believers who persevere and hold fast (tightly) to their faith, continue to keep God’s commandments and laws, who do not deny Christ, and endure (maintain obedience to God regardless) to the end.

Let’s be sure that we are in that special number as part of the body of Christ and one of the first fruits in the kingdom of God. I pray that God will help each one of us take our calling seriously and strive to live by every word of God exercising the faith of Yeshua given us to keep His commandments and endure to the end. **Revelation 22:14.**