

## Great Controversy Series

### 05 The Corruption of Christianity

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

Last time we saw in these verses a huge apostasy a great corruption in the Christian world. This corruption would not be a small thing otherwise it would not be mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The corruption would be of a spiritual nature because when the man of sin would appear he would show himself that he is God. This work would begin in Paul's time:

2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.

What is the corruption, what is the rebellion?

We talked about Satan's plan B last time. In the first 3 centuries Satan tried to destroy the church by persecution. Persecution was not effective, the church grew. But Satan didn't quit. He went to Plan B.

In his Plan B, Satan joined the church. The time of persecution begun by the Emperor Diocletian ended with Constantine coming to the throne. Constantine made Christianity legal. He gave privileges to Christians and people who were not converted joined the church to take advantage of the privileges. Constantine himself while building cathedrals and showing himself as a Christian, only when he was approaching death did he submit to the baptismal education and at last was baptized. Constantine's life became an example for other people.

Furthermore, when pagans joined the church, rather than accepting the modest, humble lifestyle of Jesus and the apostles, they brought to the church pride, luxury and pomp. The spirit of paganism was ruling the church. Pagan doctrines, rites and superstitions were included into Christian beliefs and worship. Church leaders, to spur church growth and for pagans to more readily accept Christianity, slowly brought into the church the worship of images and relics. In the end, in 787 AD at the second council of Nicaea this system of idolatry was adopted by the church. The Church of Rome, removed from the Ten Commandments the second commandment forbidding the worship of idols and to keep the number of commandments the same, they divided the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment into two.

The corruption didn't stop with that. Satan, through the church, worked to spoil further the Ten Commandments that God spoke with His own mouth. Before there was a Christian, Jew or Muslim in the world, God made the Sabbath.

Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

In the beginning, even before sin entered, God blessed the seventh day of the week as a memorial of creation for all people. This holy day is our Saturday. God has never removed this blessing. It is valid today. All of the prophets in the Holy Scriptures and Jesus Himself kept this day. The Ten Commandments which were given to the Israelites to give to the whole world were written with God's own hand on durable tables of stone. In the middle of the Ten Commandments there is a command that identifies the Lawgiver. It is the 4th commandment.

Exodus 20:8-12 " Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. <sup>12</sup> " Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

In the first centuries of Christianity this law was kept by the followers of Jesus. Satan began his stealthy work of diverting people's attention away from God and to himself. The change that he would make he introduced slowly. While the Sabbath was kept by Christians, Satan caused Sunday to be a festival day in honor of the resurrection of Jesus.

Emperor Constantine made Sunday a festival day for the whole Roman Empire on the seventh of March in the year 321. Pagans worshiped the sun on Sunday. Emperor Constantine wanted to unite the clashing causes of paganism and Christianity. Church leaders told Emperor Constantine that if pagans and Christians keep the same day, then it would ease the way for pagans to accept Christianity.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD Socrates Scholasticus, a church historian wrote,

“For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries [the Lord's Supper] on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.” Socrates

Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 5, ch. 22 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [NPNF] 2nd Series, Vol. 2, p. 132).

And Sozomen, a contemporary of Socrates, wrote,

“The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.” Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, bk. 7, ch. 19 (NPNF, 2nd Series, Vol. 12, pp. 7, 8).

For centuries, at every Church Council the importance of the Sabbath was diminished and Sunday was exalted. In the end the Roman Catholic Church claimed to transfer the sacredness of the Sabbath to Sunday based on its own authority. Sabbathkeepers were accursed.

The Catholic Church claims that it is the visible head of the universal church of Jesus. They ascribe to themselves authority over all church leaders. The title of “Lord, God the pope” has been ascribed to the pontiff.

We hold upon this **earth the place of God Almighty**"- Pope Leo XIII Encyclical Letter, June 29, 1894.

"The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God." Lucius Ferraris, “Papa,” art. 2, in his *Prompta Bibliotheca Canonica, Juridica, Moralis, Theologica, Ascetica, Polemica, Rubristica, Historica*. (“Handy Library”), Vol. 5, published in Petit-Montrouge (Paris) by J. P. Migne, 1858 edition, column 1823, Latin. <http://biblelight.net/claims.htm>.

Who can change God’s law? Who can hold God’s place?

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Let’s go back to the Old Testament. The prophet Daniel saw a vision. The date is about 553 BC. Daniel saw in his vision someone who explained the vision:

**Daniel 7:23-25** <sup>23</sup> ¶ " Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. <sup>24</sup> The ten horns *are* ten kings *Who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, And shall subdue three kings. <sup>25</sup> He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most

High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High. And shall intend to change times and law.

Many people tell me that Christianity is wrong. O.K., which Christianity? The Christianity of the Bible or the Christianity of history? There is a corruption of Christianity. The thing that the critics should know is this: Some 550 years before Christianity appeared, the prophet Daniel foretold it. Paul foretold it. We are not uninformed about this.

In Daniel's prophecy he said the following about the man of sin: [He] shall persecute the saints of the Most High. In another sermon we will look at this in more detail.

Next time we meet we will look at rise of the papacy in terms of power and authority.

Now for us, of what importance are these things? For now, God calls us to a reform. Almost the whole world is trampling on God's Ten Commandments. Satan has fooled nearly everyone. Before Jesus comes the law of God will be exalted by His people. Most people will reject the Ten Commandments and will not be saved. The ones who reject God's law reject the lawgiver.

The world, following after the papacy will keep Sunday which is the false Sabbath and the symbol of the Catholic Church's authority. Now we know that in Turkey the legal day of rest is Sunday. Where did Sunday rest come from? When the crisis comes, what will you do?