

The Death of Liberty

*Find out what happens when
history and Bible prophecy collide*

Contents

1. The Great Apostasy
2. The Darkness Deepens
3. The Protestant Reformation
4. The Antichrist in America
5. The Mark of the Beast
6. The Fall of Babylon
7. The Time of Trouble
8. God's People Delivered

Unless otherwise noted, all Bible texts are from the New King James Version (NKJV), copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

Copyright © 2025 by
John Howard
All rights reserved

Chapter One – The Great Apostasy

In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul predicted the great apostasy that was to come into the Christian Church, declaring that the day of Christ would not come “unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 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,” adding the warning that “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess. 2:3, 4, 7). Even in his day, Paul could see errors creeping into the church that would prepare for her inevitable fall.

Little by little, at first in secrecy and silence, and then more openly as it increased in power and gained control of the minds of men, “the mystery of lawlessness” continued its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of paganism made their way into the Christian Church. The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But when the persecution finally stopped, and Christianity was gradually accepted by kings and rulers, the church set aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the outward display and pride of pagan priests and rulers, and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions.

The nominal conversion of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century caused great excitement, and the world, clothed in a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be conquered, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church.

Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ. This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of “the man of sin,” foretold in prophecy as opposing and exalting himself above God. That gigantic system of false religion is a masterpiece of Satan’s power—a monument of his efforts to seat himself on the throne, to rule the earth according to his will.

Satan once endeavored to form a compromise with Christ. He came to Jesus in the wilderness of temptation and showed Him the kingdoms of the world in all their glory, offering to give all to Him if He would simply acknowledge his supremacy. While Christ rebuked Satan, forcing him to leave, Satan presents the same temptations to man with far greater success. To secure money, power, and worldly honor, the church was led to seek the favor and support of the great men of earth, and having rejected Christ, she was induced to yield allegiance to the representative of Satan—the bishop of Rome.

It is one of the leading doctrines of Catholicism that the pope is the visible head of the universal church of Christ, invested with supreme authority over bishops, priests, and clergy in all parts of the world. More than this, the pope has been given the very titles of Deity. He has been called “Lord God the Pope,” and has been declared infallible. He demands the honor of all men. The same claim urged by Satan in the wilderness of temptation is still urged by him through the church of Rome, and vast numbers are ready to honor him. But those who fear and reverence God respond to this heaven-daring assumption the same way that Christ met the solicitations of Satan: ““You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve”” (Luke 4:8).

God has never given any insinuation in His word that He has appointed a man to be the head of the church. The doctrine of papal supremacy is directly opposed to the teachings of the Bible, but for hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their homes, and dishonest priests and church leaders interpreted it to sustain their own deceptive doctrines. By this means, the pope came to be almost universally accepted as the vicar of God on earth.

While Catholics have consistently brought the charge of heresy and willful separation from the true church against Protestants, these accusations actually apply more to themselves. They are the ones who laid down the banner of Christ and departed from “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Prophecy declared that the papacy was to speak pompous words against God, and that he would “intend to change times and law” (Daniel 7:25). It did not take long before it began to attempt these changes. In order to give the pagans an alternative to idol worship, and promote their nominal acceptance of Christianity, the adoration of idols and relics was gradually introduced into Christian worship. Eventually, a general council established this system of idolatry. Finally, to complete the sacrilegious work, the church removed the second commandment, forbidding image worship, from the Ten Commandments, while dividing the tenth commandment into two parts in order to preserve the number.

The spirit of compromise to paganism opened the way for a further disregard of Heaven’s authority. Satan, working through unconsecrated leaders of the church, tampered with the fourth commandment also, and attempted to set aside the ancient Sabbath, the day which

God had blessed and sanctified (See Genesis 2:2, 3), and to exalt the festival observed by the heathen as “the venerable day of the sun” in its place. This change was not initially attempted openly. In the first centuries the true Sabbath was kept by all Christians. They were jealous for the honor of God and, believing that His law is unchangeable, they zealously guarded it. But Satan worked with great subtlety through his agents to achieve his object. In order to draw the attention of the people to the observance of Sunday, it was made a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. Religious services were held upon it, but it was initially regarded as a day of recreation, while the Sabbath was still sacredly observed.

In the early part of the fourth century, the emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. The day of the sun was revered by his pagan subjects and was honored by Christians. It was the emperor’s policy to unite the conflicting interests of paganism and Christianity. He was urged to do this by the bishops of the church who, inspired by ambition and thirst for power, perceived that if the same day was observed by both Christians and pagans, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans, and advance the power and glory of the church. But while many God-fearing Christians were gradually led to regard Sunday as possessing a degree of sacredness, they still held the true Sabbath as the holy day of the Lord, and observed it in obedience to the fourth commandment.

Satan had not completed his work. He was resolved to gather the Christian world under his banner and to exercise his power through his vicar, the proud pontiff who claimed to be the representative of Christ. Through half-converted pagans, ambitious bishops, and world-

loving churchmen, he accomplished his purpose. Vast councils were held from time to time in which the church leaders gathered from around the world. In nearly every council, the Sabbath which God had instituted was pressed down a little lower, while Sunday worship was correspondingly exalted. As a result, the pagan festival finally came to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a relic of Judaism, and its observers were declared to be cursed.

The great apostate church had succeeded in exalting himself “above all that is called God or that is worshiped” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). He had dared to change the only precept of the law that unmistakably points all mankind to the true and living God. In the fourth commandment, God is revealed as the Creator of “the heavens and the earth,” and is distinguished from all false gods (Exodus 20:11). It was as a memorial of the work of creation that the seventh day was sanctified as a rest day for man. It was designed to always keep God before the minds of men as the source of life and the object of reverence and worship. Satan is constantly working to turn men from their allegiance to God and from obedience to His law, therefore he directs his efforts especially against that commandment that points to God as the Creator.

Protestants now urge that the resurrection of Christ on Sunday made it the Christian Sabbath, but Scripture evidence is lacking. No such honor was given to the first day by Christ or His apostles. The observance of Sunday as a Christian institution had its origin in the “the mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) which, even in Paul’s day, had begun its work. Where and when did the Lord adopt this child of the papacy? What reason can be given for a change which the Scriptures do not sanction?