



The Apostasy and the Sabbath

Scripture References

Acts 20:26-32—grievous wolves will enter in

2 Timothy 4:1-5—will not endure sound doctrine

2 Peter 2:1-3—false teachers, damnable heresies

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8—a falling away, the man of sin be revealed

Galatians 4:8-11—weak and beggarly elements

Revelation 13:1-10—they worshipped the dragon; worshipped the beast

Review Questions

1. What is the distinguishing characteristic of the one true God?
 2. What is his memorial and sign?
 3. What was Christ's attitude toward the law and the Sabbath?
 4. What is the testimony of the apostles in regard to the law?
-

Answers to Review Questions

1. What is the distinguishing characteristic of the one true God?—
Jeremiah 10:10-12
 2. What is his memorial and sign?—Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Ezekiel
20:12
 3. What was Christ's attitude toward the law and the Sabbath?—
Matthew 5:17
 4. What is the testimony of the apostles in regard to the law?—
Romans 8:4; James 1:25; 2:10; 1 John 3:4
-

When Jesus revealed to his disciples the fate of Jerusalem and the scenes of the second advent, he foretold also the experience of his people **from the time when he should be taken from them, to his return in power and glory for their deliverance.** From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the **apostolic** church, and, penetrating deeper into the future, his eye discerned the fierce, wasting tempests that were to beat upon his followers in the coming ages of darkness and persecution. In a few brief utterances, of awful significance, he foretold the portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God.

[Matthew 24:9, 21, 22.] The followers of Christ must tread the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering which their Master trod. The enmity that burst forth against the world's Redeemer, would be manifested against all who should believe on his name. (GC88 p. 39.1; emphasis supplied)

The **history of the early church** testified to the fulfillment of the Saviour's words. The powers of earth and hell arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of his followers. Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity. The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions, and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." [Hebrews 10:32.] They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." [Hebrews 11:36, 37, 38.] Great numbers sealed their testimony with their blood. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike slain without mercy. (GC88 39.2)

These persecutions, beginning under Nero about the time of the martyrdom of Paul, continued with greater or less fury for centuries. Christians were falsely accused of the most dreadful crimes, and **declared to be the cause of great calamities**—famine, pestilence, and earthquake. As they became the objects of popular hatred and suspicion, informers stood ready, for the sake of gain, to betray the innocent. They were condemned as rebels against the empire, as foes of religion, and pests to society. Great numbers were thrown to wild beasts or burned alive in the amphitheaters. Some were crucified; others were covered with the skins of wild animals, and thrust into the arena to be torn by dogs. Their punishment was often made the chief entertainment at public fetes. Vast multitudes assembled to enjoy the sight, and greeted their dying agonies with laughter and applause. (GC88 40.1)

Wherever they sought refuge, the followers of Christ were **hunted like beasts of prey**. They were forced to seek concealment in desolate and solitary places. "Destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

[Hebrews 11:36, 37, 38.] The catacombs afforded shelter for thousands. Beneath the hills outside the city of Rome, long galleries had been tunneled through earth and rock; the dark and intricate network of passages extended for miles beyond the city walls. In these underground retreats, the followers of Christ buried their dead; and here also, when suspected and proscribed, they found a home. When the Lifegiver shall awaken those who have fought the good fight, many a martyr for Christ's sake will come forth from those gloomy caverns. (GC88 40.2)

Under the fiercest persecution, these witnesses for Jesus **kept their faith unsullied**. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they **uttered no complaint**. With words of faith, patience, and hope, **they encouraged one another** to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ. Trials and persecution were but steps bringing them nearer their rest and their reward. (GC88 41.1)

In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence. . . .

Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God, by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be deceived, and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall an easy prey. (GC88 41.3, 42.2)

**Now the apostolic church
becomes the apostate church.**

The great adversary now endeavored to gain by artifice what he had failed to secure by force. Persecution ceased, and in its stead were substituted the dangerous allurements of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God, and to believe in his death and resurrection; but they had no conviction of sin, and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some concessions on their part, they proposed that Christians should make concessions, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ.

(GC88 42.3)

Now the church was in fearful peril. Prison, torture, fire, and sword were blessings in comparison with this. Some of the Christians stood firm, declaring that they could make no compromise. Others were in favor of yielding or modifying some features of their faith, and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity, urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. **Under a cloak of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith, and turn their minds from the Word of truth. (GC88 42.4)**

Most of the Christians at last consented to lower their standard, and **a union was formed** between Christianity and paganism. . . . There were some, however, who were not misled by these delusions. They still maintained their fidelity to the Author of truth, and worshiped God alone. (GC88 43.1)

There have ever been two classes among those who profess to be followers of Christ. While one class study the Saviour's life, and earnestly seek to correct their defects and to conform to the Pattern, the other class shun the plain, practical truths which expose their errors. Even in her best estate, and church was not composed wholly of the true, pure, and sincere. (GC88 43.2)

The apostles encountered those in the church who professed **godliness** while they were secretly cherishing iniquity. Ananias and Sapphira acted the part of deceivers, pretending to make an entire sacrifice for God, when they were covetously withholding a portion for themselves. The Spirit of truth revealed to the apostles the real character of these pretenders, and the judgments of God rid the church of this foul blot upon its purity. This signal evidence of the discerning Spirit of Christ in the church was a terror to hypocrites and evil-doers. They could not long remain in connection with those who were, in habit and disposition, constant representatives of Christ . . . (GC88 44.1)

After a long and severe conflict, **the faithful few decided to dissolve all union** with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the Word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war. (GC88 45.2)

The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evil-doers wherever their character and doctrines were known. Therefore they were hated by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. (GC88 46.1)

Great Mysteries

The mystery of iniquity

The mystery of godliness

The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked

The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked, has been a cause of great perplexity to many who are weak in faith.

Some are even ready to cast away their confidence in God, because he suffers the basest of men to prosper, while the best and purest are afflicted and tormented by their cruel power. How, it is asked, can One who is just and merciful, and who is also infinite in power, tolerate such injustice and oppression? This is a question with which we have nothing to do. God has given us sufficient evidence of his love, and we are not to doubt his goodness because we cannot understand the workings of his providence. (GC88 47.1)

Said the Saviour to his disciples, **foreseeing the doubts** that would press upon their souls in days of trial and darkness, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." [John 15:20.] Jesus suffered for us more than any of his followers can be made to suffer through the cruelty of wicked men. Those who are called to endure torture and martyrdom, are but following in the steps of God's dear Son. (GC88 47.1)

God permits the wicked to prosper, and to reveal their enmity against him, that when they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquity, all may see his justice and mercy in their utter destruction. The day of his vengeance hastens, when all who have transgressed his law and oppressed his people will meet the just recompense of their deeds; when every act of cruelty or injustice toward God's faithful ones will be punished as though done to Christ himself. (GC88 48.1)

There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." [2 Timothy 3:12.] **Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber?**—The only reason is, that the church has conformed to the world's standard, and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and his apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the Word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled. (GC88 48.2)

The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, foretold the great apostasy which would result in the establishment of the papal power. He declared that the day of Christ should not come, "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." [2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 7.] And furthermore, the apostle warns his brethren that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." [2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 7.] Even at that early date he saw, creeping into the church, errors that would prepare the way for the development of the papacy. (GC88 49.1)

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 upon the throne to rule the earth according to his will.

(GC88 50.1)

Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the Word that even the Saviour of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, "It is written." To every suggestion of the adversary, he opposed the wisdom and power of the Word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in **ignorance of the Scriptures**. The Bible would exalt God, and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions. Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over Church and State. (GC88 51.3)

The detector of error having been removed, Satan worked according to his will. Prophecy had declared that the **papacy was to "think to change times and laws."** [Daniel 7:25.] This work it was not slow to attempt. To afford converts from heathenism a substitute for the worship of idols, and thus to promote their nominal acceptance of Christianity, the adoration of images and relics was gradually introduced into the Christian worship. The decree of a general council [Second Council of Nice, A.D. 787.] finally established this system of idolatry. To complete the sacrilegious work, Rome presumed to expunge from the law of God the second commandment, forbidding image worship, and to divide the tenth commandment, in order to preserve the number. (GC88 51.4)

To prepare the way for the work which he designed to accomplish, Satan had led the Jews, before the advent of Christ, to **load down the Sabbath** with the most rigorous exactions, making its observance a burden. Now, taking advantage of the false light in which he had thus caused it to be regarded, he cast contempt upon it as a Jewish institution. While Christians continued to observe the Sunday as a joyous festival, he led them, in order to show their hatred of Judaism, to make the Sabbath a fast, a day of sadness and gloom. (GC88 52.2)

In the early part of the fourth century, the emperor Constantine issued a decree making **Sunday** a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. [See Appendix, note 1.] 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 heathenism 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 the heathen, it would promote the nominal acceptance of Christianity by pagans, and thus advance the power and glory of the church. But while Christians were gradually led to regard Sunday as possessing a degree of sacredness, they still held the true Sabbath as the holy of the Lord, and observed it in obedience to the fourth commandment.

(GC88 53.1)

The arch-deceiver had not completed his work. He was resolved to gather the Christian world under his banner, and to exercise his power through his vicegerent, the proud pontiff who claimed to be the representative of Christ. Through half-converted pagans, ambitious prelates, and world-loving churchmen, he accomplished his purpose. **Vast councils** were held, from time to time, in which the dignitaries of the church were convened from all the world. **In nearly every council the Sabbath which God had instituted was pressed down a little lower**, while the Sunday was correspondingly exalted. Thus the pagan festival came finally to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a relic of Judaism, and its observers were declared to be accursed. (GC88 53.2)

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 day by Christ or his apostles. The observance of Sunday as a Christian institution had its origin in that "mystery of lawlessness" [2 Thessalonians 2:7, Revised Version.] which, even in Paul's day, had begun its work. Where and when did the Lord adopt this child of the papacy? What valid reason can be given for a change which the Scriptures do not sanction? (GC88 54.1)

Indulgences

Mass

Inquisition

The noontide of the papacy was the world's moral midnight. The Holy Scriptures were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests. Like the Pharisees of old, the papist leaders hated the light which would reveal their sins. God's law, the standard of righteousness, having been removed, they exercised power without limit, and practiced vice without restraint. Fraud, avarice, and profligacy prevailed. Men shrank from no crime by which they could gain wealth or position. The palaces of popes and prelates were scenes of the vilest debauchery. Some of the reigning pontiffs were guilty of crimes so revolting that secular rulers endeavored to depose these dignitaries of the church as monsters too vile to be tolerated. For centuries Europe had made no progress in learning, arts, or civilization. A moral and intellectual paralysis had fallen upon Christendom. (GC88 60.2)

Waldenses

Apostolic Church and the Apostate Church

1. Concerning Babylon, the symbol of the apostate church . . . (COL 178.4)
 2. **The history of the early church testified to the fulfillment of the Saviour's words.** The powers of earth and hell arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of his followers. Paganism foresaw that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her forces to destroy Christianity. The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions, and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." [Hebrews 10:32.] They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." [Hebrews 11:36, 37, 38.] Great numbers sealed their testimony with their blood. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike slain without mercy. (GC88 39.2)
-

Chick-fil-A closed on Sunday

Our founder S. Truett Cathy made the decision to close on Sundays in 1946 when he opened his first restaurant in Hapeville, Georgia. Having worked seven days a week in restaurants open 24 hours, Truett saw the importance of closing on Sundays so that he and his employees could set aside one day to rest, enjoy time with their families and loved ones or worship if they choose, a practice we uphold today.

Why keep a weekly Earth Sabbath Day

We need to save energy this helps combat climate change and helps the environment because most power sources produce pollution or greenhouse gases when burned. The less energy used, the less pollution there will be in the air and water, harming our planet and its inhabitants. When it comes to saving the environment, your daily decisions may feel insignificant but they are not, and reducing energy consumption by one seventh by keeping an Earth Sabbath day one day a week would have a positive impact on our environment and help with the environmental crisis we are currently faced with.

THE SABBATH, WHY CHANGED TO SUNDAY

But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday.

For, as on that day light first shone on the world, so by the Resurrection of our Redeemer on the same day, by whom was thrown open to us the gate to eternal life, we were called out of darkness into light; and hence the Apostles would have it called the Lord's day.

We also learn from the Sacred Scriptures that the first day of the week was held sacred because on that day the work of creation commenced, and on that day the Holy Ghost was given to the Apostles. (*Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, pp. 402, 403)

Why Did the Word Become Flesh?

460 . . . "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." [Foot noted to Athanasius] "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods." [Foot noted to Thomas Aquinas] (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition; accessed at <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/VI/>)

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

(2 Thessalonians 2:7)

And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist *it* not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear

his **iniquity**. (Leviticus 5:17)

The law of truth was in his mouth, and **iniquity** was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

(Malachi 2:6-7)

The Sabbath is a test of loyalty like the tree of knowledge of good and evil was. The Sabbath was made for man. It was not observed in heaven before creation.

“The Sabbath was instituted in Eden before the fall, and was observed by Adam and Eve, and all the heavenly host. God rested on the seventh day, and blessed and hallowed it. I saw that the Sabbath never will be done away; but that the redeemed saints, and all the angelic host, will observe it in honor of the great Creator to all eternity” (*EW 217.2*).

“The importance of the Sabbath as the memorial of creation is that it keeps ever present the true reason why worship is due to God,” because he is the Creator, and we his creatures. “The Sabbath therefore lies at the very foundation of divine worship; for it teaches this great truth in the most impressive manner, and no other institution does this. The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and his creatures. This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten.” [J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*] It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden . . . (GC88

437.2)

. . . and so long as the fact that he is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God, "him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." It follows that the message which commands men to worship God and keep his commandments, will especially call upon them to keep the fourth commandment. (GC88 437.2)

Apostate Church

The time is upon us when the miracle-working power of the arch deceiver will be more decidedly revealed. And his deceptions will increase in their delusive attraction, so that they will perplex, and if possible, deceive, the very elect. The prince of darkness with his evil angels is working upon the Christian world, inducing those who profess the name of Christ to stand under the banner of darkness, to make war with those who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus. **An apostate church will unite with the powers of earth and hell to place upon the forehead or in the hand, the mark of the beast,** and prevail upon the children of God to worship the beast and his image. They will seek to compel them to renounce their allegiance to God's law, and yield homage to the papacy. Then will come the times which will try men's souls; for the confederacy of apostasy will demand that the loyal subjects of God shall renounce the law of Jehovah, and repudiate the truth of his word. (*RH* November 8, 1892, par. 7)

Then will the gold be separated from the dross, and it will be made apparent who are the godly, who are loyal and true, and who are the disloyal, the dross and the tinsel. What clouds of chaff will then be borne away by the fan of God! Where now our eyes can discover only rich floors of wheat, will be chaff blown away with the fan of God. Every one who is not centered in Christ will fail to stand the test and ordeal of that day. (Ibid.)

While those who are clothed with Christ's righteousness will stand firm to truth and duty, those who have trusted in their own righteousness will be ranged under the black banner of the prince of darkness. Then it will be seen whether the choice is for Christ or Belial. Those who have been self-distrustful, who have been so circumstanced that they have not dared to face stigma and reproach, will at last openly declare themselves for Christ and his law; while many who have appeared to be flourishing trees, but who have borne no fruit, will go with the multitude to do evil, and will receive the mark of apostasy in the forehead or in the hand. (Ibid.)