

*Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

*13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

*14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

*15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.*

*16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

*17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

# The Great Apostasy

## **Part 1**

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### **Armageddon Continues**

We have found as we have studied into the Revelation that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ, revealing Christ throughout the Gospel Day. We have found how He shows Himself strong, what His grace and His power can do for men and women in every trying circumstance of life. We have found that the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head is the holy mother church of the morning time, the church of the living God. We found that the man child which she brought forth was the converts who were caught up to God and to His throne. The man child was those converts who were killed for true Christianity in the early days of the church.

We proved the great red dragon not to be the devil himself, but an agent through which the devil was working; namely, the Pagan Roman Empire with the seven heads and the ten horns working against the church. Going deeper into the study, we read where John, in the vision, saw war going on between the dragon and his ministers, and Christ and His ministers. The dragon was cast down into the earth, or put down from that ecclesiastical position, and proven by the Word of God to be earthly, sensual, and devilish; there was no God in that religion whatsoever.

I want you to understand who the dragon is wroth with; he is wroth with the seed of the woman, the remnant of her seed. Now this brings us up to our very day and time: the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. Revelation 19:10 will tell you that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. So, who is the devil stirred at? Who is he against? Who is he making war with?

Those who keep the commandments of God and have the Spirit of God.

He is not against nominal religion, but he is against those who definitely live for God, those who definitely keep the commandments of God and have the real Spirit of God working in their lives. Friend, this conflict is a spiritual conflict, as we taught you in the beginning. Armageddon is a battle of true Christianity against anti-christianity. While false teachers are talking about one antichrist to come in the future, the Bible says there are

many antichrists. Who are they? All sources of religion which are definitely against the true Word of God are

antichrist religions and working against the true cause of Christ.

### **The Faithful Record**

There are two verses in this Scripture lesson that we want to consider. They do not portray a very beautiful picture, but one that we can gain much from if we will really open our hearts to God. Let us read Revelation 12:6 and 14: "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. . . . And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

The Word of God bears a faithful record; it tells the whole story. Many people who study the Revelation just gloss right over this apostasy. All they talk about is that God had a place prepared to keep the church through the 1260 years of dark ages, but right before our eyes

is a picture of the great apostasy. When man writes his books, he is prone to only tell the good parts, but the Word of God is faithful in telling the whole story.

Even though God exalted Abraham to the place that he could be called the friend of God and the father of the faithful, yet when he lied, the Bible told on him. We never get so close to God that He covers our wrongs.

It was the same with Moses. No one got as close and near to the heart of God in the Old Testament as Moses, but when his anger got stirred until he threw down the stones and broke them, God told on him. The Word of God is the faithful record.

When Jonah got peeved and sat under a gourd vine, the Bible told on him. It tells both sides of the story, the good and the bad. The Apostle Peter weakened and denied the Lord. Demas, a man once greatly used of

Christ, one of the leaders in the church and highly esteemed for his preaching, became worldly minded—having loved this present world, he went to hell loving it. The Bible tells all. The Revelation of Christ Jesus is spoken of as a faithful and true witness; it deals with the facts.

Now, when we begin to study the apostasy and the terrible dangers of it, I would like to be able to say that the church continued right on through in her pristine glory, but I cannot tell you that. I would like to be able to tell you that she continued in that high position, being the light of the world, shaking worlds and casting down evil, but that is not the story. No, my friend, following some of the greatest works that the church ever accomplished was a great falling away, an apostasy, and a turning from God's Word.

I want to tell you, just beyond every victory you have, you will go through your sorest temptation. The devil will be working in every way possible to work an apostasy in your individual life. Brother, the devil does not take these great victories that the church has sitting

down. Beyond every mountain is a valley. Every time the people of God got high in their experience, the next move was a valley, and the devil brought many people down. It does not, however, have to be that way. The Word of God comes to us as a lesson, to point out the dangers and how easily this can befall us unless we learn by the example of the people of the past, and do differently than they did.

### **Darkness and Famine**

The Apostle Paul, through the discernment of the Holy Spirit, knew there was a falling away coming. He knew what was going to happen shortly after he died. In Acts 20:28-30 he wrote to the elders: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God . . . For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

God prophesied some of these things. This great falling away from truth of the morning time did not happen because God said so, but He saw what the hearts of men would be like. Let us read Amos 8:9-11: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of

the Lord."

God prophesied that a day would come when He would cause the sun to go down, He would cause the light to cease to shine, and there would be a great famine following it, a famine of hearing the Word of God. Someone may ask, "When does it take place? Can you pinpoint it?"

In Matthew 24:29 Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days [A.D. 70 the destruction of literal Jerusalem and the temple—spoken of as the Great Tribulation in the Scriptures], shall the sun be darkened [this sun, that the woman was clothed in], and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. . . ." Because of these things, there will be darkness come over the earth, not literal darkness, but spiritual darkness.

What sun, moon, and stars will cease to shine? The church was the light of the world. God prophesied this way because of her attitude toward His Word; she did not want it anymore. Now, just mark this down; we are only the light of the world as we hear the Word, obey it, and apply it to our lives. That is the only way it shines. Whenever we get the idea that the morning church had—"We are still going to be the church, but we are not going to obey the dictates of God's Word"—the light is going to begin to dim. It is going to go out. This is why such conditions of coldness, deadness, formality, and darkness are in congregations of the Church of God over the land.

My friend, it is well for us to study these things. The tribulation was in A.D. 70, and from then on, we can read in Peter's and Paul's writings of that falling away coming. The tribulation at Jerusalem took place at A.D. 70, and directly following that, the sun began to be darkened, a prophetic picture of a falling away from Gospel light by God's people.

### **"And the Woman Fleed"**

When things begin to happen in the church, any true minister of the Gospel is going to begin to see it. Every one of God's faithful ministers began to point out this apostasy that was coming right in the church. The Apostle Paul instructed the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first [falling away from truth], and that man of sin [the pope of Rome] be revealed. . . ."

Paul foresaw a falling away from truth, and he saw that the light was going to begin to dim. This falling away is symbolized in different Scriptures in different ways. The church is spoken of in the Scripture as the bride, or the pure woman. Revelation 12:6 tells us, "And the woman fled [the Greek says that she apostatized] into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Who feeds her there? The nations that she was supposed to rule over with the rod of iron.

What you feed the church is what makes her what she is. As long as God had true ministers who were feeding her the truth, she had grace, ability, and understanding to stand against every force of hell. False preachers, however, began to get in among the church and to feed her. She was weakened until she apostatized and fled from her position that God had ordained for her to stand in. So, the pure woman, the church, is symbolized as fleeing. The church here plays a position just like some wives: when the battles of life get too much, they say, "Well, I'm just going to leave." That is what the church did then. She fled, or apostatized.

While there were millions who stood true and were killed and caught up to glory, there were countless millions who recanted and backed off. When they were brought right to the stake, about seven out of eight recanted. They did not have what it took to stand. We get a picture here of a great part of the church fleeing from the staunch of battle. Oh, it is the same today. We have people who like to conic out to church in dress parade, but just watch them flee when the battle comes.

In Revelation 12:6 we have a picture of countless numbers of people who fell away, fled, and apostatized into the wilderness. I want to tell you right now, into the wilderness is a one hundred percent different picture than standing on Mount Zion. A wilderness throughout the Word of God symbolizes a cold, dark place of confusion.

The church is also spoken of as Mount Sion, according to Hebrews 12:22. Revelation 8:8 shows us Mount Zion as a mountain on fire, going into the sea: the same picture of apostasy. What is the sea? Revelation

17:15 tells us, ". . . The waters . . . are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." What happened? A church that was governed by God, led by the Word of God, living by the Word of God, and set on fire by the Holy Ghost, fell into the hands of men and her fire went out; she lost her glory and went into confusion.

Not only is the church likened to a bride and called Mount Zion; but she is also called the holy city. In Hebrews 12:22, she is called the heavenly Jerusalem. Revelation the 11th chapter pictures the holy city, the New Jerusalem, being trodden under the foot of man for 1260 years. Four different places in the Bible point out this apostasy under different symbols, but all tell the same story. What was the picture? Men took over what God had once controlled. How did men take over? The message from God seemed too straight and seemed to require too much. So many, as they do today, desired to come down to a more human level.

### **The Measuring Rod**

John was put on the Isle of Patmos to die, but Jesus came to him and said, "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Revelation 10:11). Why did God send John back? Because John was the only one right at that time to depend on. When he went back, he wrote First, Second, and Third John. If you want some strong stuff to line up to, measure your life with that.

In Revelation 11:1 John said, "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: [There is that Word of God again. The reed is a symbolic expression of a measuring piece, and this reed was like a rod. The rod always symbolizes the Word of God. ] and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God [the church], and the altar, and them that worship therein."

Why was John instructed to measure the church? Because in the fall, the Word of God was beginning to close, and the doctrines and commandments of men were being taught until you could not even find the church. Everything was the church, just like it is today. So God told John to take the rod and measure the church so that people can see where the church starts and where it stops. There needs to be lots of that kind of preaching today. Brother, when you get right down to measuring the true Church of God, she does not reach over the false hills of Babylon (false religion).

Verse 2 says, "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months [or 1260 prophetic days]." I want you to see something. John was told to measure the temple and them that worship therein. The great doctrines of the church are necessary for the church to be the church. Brother, the devil wrecked the Church of God reformation movement by making them feel that they did not need to

preach the doctrines of the church to be the church. On the contrary, nothing else will make the church the church, separate and distinct, but the doctrines of the church. Without the preaching of the doctrines of the church, the people lose sight of the church.

So John was instructed to measure the temple, or the church, to let the people see how big the church is, what she takes in, where her walls reach, and he was instructed to measure the altar and them that worship therein. What is the altar? If people could only realize what the altar is, they would forget about two cleansings and two altars. Christ is the altar. How many altars do you have? How many Christs do you have? The altars in the Old Testament temple symbolized Christ. He is the altar. He is the sacrifice. Everything about that old temple was Him. So when we measure the altar, my friend, we are reminding people that it is only through Christ that we receive a full atonement for sin.

As we learned in a previous message, the life is in the blood. At the same time the quickening power of the Holy Spirit regenerates and cleanses you with the blood, there is life put in you whereby you can serve the living God. That is the altar, but because it is not preached, we have gone into greater darkness, I suppose, than ever existed before. You cannot get in the true temple without coming by Christ in a full commitment to Him. He cleanses you from all sin and puts the power of His life within you; then you come into the temple. No man can operate the altar. No man can set up an atonement for sin; it is only in Christ.

### **Heart Circumcision**

John was not only to measure the temple and the altar, but also them that worship therein. This merely refers to the people who are in the temple, who worship in the true church. I want to make a statement, and the Bible will support me: there is not an uncircumcised Jew in the New Testament temple, the Church of God. Some teach that when you are born again, you come into the temple, and later on you have to have

circumcision. No! There is nobody but New Testament Jews in the temple. No one was considered a Jew until he was circumcised, and the circumcision of the New Testament is circumcision of the heart. When does it happen? When you come in repentance and God takes the old heart out and puts a new one in. Thank God, you become circumcised.

In those days none but the males could be listed in Israel because none but the male could be circumcised. In this New Testament, however, there is neither male nor female. Why? Because the woman needs circumcision now; she needs her heart changed.

So who is truly worshiping in the Church of God? In John's day the agnostics and others rose up and said, "This isn't necessary. You do not have to do this." So John was instructed to measure them that worship therein, not by men's ideas but by the rod. Nowhere in the Bible does it tell you to measure by any preacher's book.

Paul said that he did not come preaching with wisdom of words. Truth is not found by wisdom of words. If it were, the wisest men in the country would have the truth. Truth comes by divine revelation. You can take words and prove anything. Plenty of people get off the track by studying words. If you ever get the truth of the matter, you must get on your knees, pour your heart out to God, and stay there until God shows you what is truth.

### **Spiritual Jews and Gentiles**

As we read Romans 2:28-29, remember that John was instructed to only measure the temple and those who worshiped therein, not those who stood in the outer court. In the old temple, it was into the outer courts that the Jew came; the Gentile had no part. The priest went into the first room and the high priest went alone into the holy of holies once a year.

When Jesus died on the Cross, He washed us in His own blood and made us kings and priests. Now we are allowed to go in. When He died on the cross, he tore down the middle wall of partition between the literal Jew and Gentile. Spiritual Jews can enter right into the holiest and live there, but in the outer court there are millions of spiritual Gentiles. Who are those Gentiles? To the Jews, they were uncircumcised unbelievers who had no part in the covenant. Today, the Gentiles symbolize unregenerate men who have no part in the new covenant.

By the time the 11th chapter of Revelation was given, the standard, or the message, had been lowered and the church was loaded down with unregenerate Gentiles, many more than the true. So when God told John to measure, he was told to only measure the temple itself. God has no measuring for the unregenerate; they cannot measure to the Word. There is no need to try to put the Word on unsaved people.

Let us read Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Do you get your revelations from God? Whom do you praise for the understanding you have? Men are afraid to stand up and say that God told them to preach it this way. My friend, the dangers of this thing that I am preaching about are all around us today.

### **Foes—Without and Within**

The Prophet Amos told us that whenever the light begins to dim, when the sun and moon, and the stars begin to fall, there would be a great famine following. That great famine is pictured here as the Word of God being closed. It was closed until the sixteenth-century reformation when it began to be opened a little.

Amos said it was not a famine of meat or drink, but a famine of hearing the Word of God. That famine was brought about from without the church and from within the church. The first way it was brought about without was by the pagan Roman emperor right at this time, whose platform was to completely close out Christianity. His platform was to seek out all copies of the Word of God that he could find and burn them. So, little by little, the Word of God was disappearing. Outwardly, the Pagan Roman Empire was burning and destroying it so that no one could read it.

That was helping to bring on the famine without; within were false teachers, right within the church, rising up and teaching perversion. Jesus warned us that when iniquity begins to abound in the church, there will be far more sinners in what is called the church than there are saints, and the sinners take over. Over the country, where that which calls itself the church is, the majority rules and the majority are sinners. If there are a few

saints there, what happens to them? They get trodden underfoot. We read that iniquity abounded. Lawlessness and rebellion got into the hearts of God's people. Going back to Revelation 11:1-2, we see that only the circumcised Jews who kept the Law could enter the court, and only the priests could enter the temple; but thank God, He has made a way for us. John was instructed not to measure the court without the temple; it is given to the Gentiles, symbolizing the unbelievers. These are not to be reckoned as of the true temple.

In the estimate of the Jews, Gentiles were idolaters, outside of God's favor. So this great group here that God told John not to even measure symbolizes a body of worshipers who are not the true children of God. God does not even spend any time trying to measure them. In that outer enclosure today, there are millions who have never come through the veil and had definite connection with Christ. They have never come by the altar, Christ. They have joined churches, they have gone to priests, they have listened to what preachers have said, but they will not measure to the Word of God.

In those days, they took over the supposed work of the church, and this caused the true temple to be cast down, trodden under the foot of man, out of the picture. Through that period of time, the true church was lost sight of, crushed down, while men and devils ruled and reigned. According to this Revelation, the only true temple God had was the individual hearts of many people who were hidden away in the dens and the caves. I know it is a sad picture, but it is a very true one.