

Can The Church Be Misled?

Is it possible that many of God's people have been misled? A close reference to God's Word reveals that if we look to any man as infallible, we can be led astray, even into idolatry!

It was Herbert W Armstrong who led many of our readers into Biblical understanding in the Church of God. Thanks to him many opened their Bibles and saw prophecy come to life before their eyes, as they learned about the coming Kingdom of God. The Church he founded grew so rapidly that it led many to recognise that God was using him, so much so that he was persuaded to accept that he was indeed very special, a prophet perhaps and, eventually, he was led to believe, an apostle!

Adulation, wealth and power though are not kind to mortals. The result was the assumption of an authority Jesus Christ clearly condemned. Matthew 20:25-26, *'Jesus called them unto him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.'*

When some of his young ministers began to look upon his words as equal to scripture, mistakes were bound to appear, and long before his death they resulted in bitter fruits, while after his death, they led directly to the fragmentation and destruction of the Church he had worked so hard to build. HWA was human, and made mistakes as do we all, and it may be that it **was just not time** for the End-Time chronology to be revealed. (Daniel 12:9).

Even so, some of the errors he made still form the foundation of the end-time beliefs of most of those fragments of the church he founded, a tragic result of what was essentially idolatry, so let us look at some of those mistakes which could deprive some of God's people of their protection during the Great Tribulation, Revelation 3:10, *'Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.'*

Let us take the 'Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last', as his major end-time scenario. Quite early on there, we see an indication of a major error which led him to condense the 7 year period of Daniel 9:27, into just 3 ½ years. *'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week**: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.'*

We can see that error confirmed by even a brief reading of Daniel chapter 11, (see our article 'Kings of The North and South') which makes it quite apparent that much more than 3 ½ years is being discussed there from verse 23 to the end of the chapter, during which one man known as the anti-Christ is active throughout almost seven years. The Churches of God though, generally only recognise the start of the last 3 ½ year period before Christ establishes His Kingdom in verses 40-41 of Daniel 11, *'He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and most of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also against the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape,'* ignoring verses 23-40, which include the first five seals of Revelation chapter 6, the previous 3 ½ years of Daniel 9:27, which is a serious error indeed.

In the chart on page 10 of 'Revelation Unveiled at Last', HWA provides in the outline that Revelation chapter 14 is about 'THE THREE MESSAGES', and only on page 29 does he provide the information that, "Chapter 14 shows the three angel's messages, proclaiming the fall, or DOOM of 'Babylon' through the seven last plagues; and the warning against the MARK OF THE BEAST, which those in 'Babylon' are deceived into having." This gross neglect of verses 6-20 of chapter 14

explains much, for this chapter is vital, along with Matthew 24 and Revelation 6, in order to understand the total chronology of those last seven years. (Read our article on Revelation 14)

Notice for example, that in Revelation 14's chronology, from verse 6, the second angel, verse 8, long before the last 7 plagues, announces the fall of a **physical Babylon** [the Israelite nations who have acted *as* Babylon] **before** the Son of Man arrives to harvest His Saints, verses 15-16, *'And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle, and reap: for the time has come for you to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.'* (Compare verse 1, Revelation 6:16, Matthew 24:30-31).

Only after that in the chronology, does a much greater harvest take place, verses 18-19, *'And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into **the great winepress of the wrath of God,**'* which is the Great Tribulation, and it is only towards the end of that 3 ½ year Great Tribulation, that the Beast and his cohorts turn upon the great false church, **spiritual Babylon** and destroy it, Revelation 17:16, *'the ten horns which you saw upon the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.'*

We see then, that Revelation 14 is a key chapter which HWA virtually ignored, resulting in a failure to recognise two distinct 'Babylons', and the total misplacement of the resurrection!

This error brings about his confusion of 'the tribulation of those days', Matthew 24:29, *the first five seals*, which are followed by the heavenly signs and the resurrection, with the 'Great Tribulation' of the 7th seal.

For example, when we combine Matthew 24 with Revelation 6 we see that **the heavenly signs** occur at the 6th seal, when the sign of the Son of Man appears in the heavens (the arrival of the Sea of Glass with Jesus Christ on His throne) and the resurrection occurs.

Referring to the first five seals, 'the Tribulation of those days', HWA states on page 15, "Yes, when we come to the full FURY of the famine and disease epidemics and what undoubtedly will be the continuance of world war THAT will be the BEGINNING of the MUCH – prophesied Great Tribulation!" On page 19 he states: "there IT IS! In Matthew 24:29 you read in your own Bible that the heavenly signs in the sun, moon, and stars would occur immediately after the Great Tribulation". Wrong! It says *'after the tribulation of those days'*!

Those heavenly signs actually follow 'the tribulation of those days', the first five seals, and at the 6th seal, **precede** the Great Tribulation, which Revelation chapter 7 verse 4 and 14, and 8:1-2 clearly tell us begin at the opening of the 7th seal.

The importance of this mistake cannot be overemphasised, because many have been misled by that misunderstanding to think of the first 5 seals as the Great Tribulation, and the Seventh Seal as 'the Day of the Lord', with the resurrection taking place at **the end** of the last 3 ½ years, the end of the 7th Seal, rather than when Jesus Christ actually returns for His Saints at the 6th Seal!

Also, this means that almost all the church expects the first sign of the latter days will be Daniel 11:40-41, *'And at the time of the end shall the king of the south attack him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and most of the children of Ammon,'* not realising that Jacob's trouble had

then been in progress for 3 ½ years; the 5th seal being mentioned in verse 35 of the same chapter, *'And some of them of understanding shall fall, to test them, and to purify them, and to make them white, **until the time of the end**: because it is yet for the time appointed.'*

Misled into ignoring Revelation 14, they also do not recognise the first sign of the start of those last 7 years, verses 6-7, *'And I saw another angel fly in midheaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment has come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.'*

They may rejoice then to hear that Christ's return is near, **but they do not expect the fall of their nations** who have acted as Babylon, **just a few months later**, verse 8, *'And there followed another angel, saying, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen**, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'* That results in their being trapped in the defeat and invasion of their nations, so that they are unable to fulfil **their God given role** in Jerusalem. Jeremiah 50:28, *'The voice of them that **flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.**'* Isaiah 62:6-7, 11-12, *'**I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, who shall never hold their peace day nor night: you that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence. And give him no rest, till he establishes, and till he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth**.....Behold, the LORD has proclaimed unto the ends of the earth, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and you shall be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.'*

Nor are they able to flee from Jerusalem at the arrival of the Beast's armies at the 3 ½ year point, Luke 21:20-21, *'And when you shall see Jerusalem surrounded with armies, then know that its desolation is near. **Then let them who are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them who are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the country enter into it.**'*, just before the resurrection. (Read our End-Time series)

Consequently, we can see that blindly following a man, even one used by God so effectively to reach so many people, has led to an unpreparedness which may disqualify them from the first resurrection at the 6th seal, Matthew 25: 1-10, *'Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.'*

1 Timothy 4:1, *'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;'*

Only by a one on one relationship with Jesus Christ, by diligently and directly studying His word, and by prayer, can we properly prepare ourselves for the difficult times ahead, and avoid being misled into such serious error. Revelation 3:20, *'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.'*

.....