

## The Perilous Results of Idolatry

I met a man, stooped and staggering under a heavy burden of what looked like an old man, carved and painted with the words 'He was right.' "Excuse me" I said, "Why are you carrying that? Is it an idol?" "No", he replied indignantly. "I'm no idolater! Can't you see that it says, "He was right."

A Church of God minister, James McBride, recently wrote in CGOM's 'New Horizons' magazine: "In the church of God the pretence of a united force has failed. Having abandoned the New Testament pattern for church polity they opted for the vanity of size. The lust for power and control drove the concept of large organizations, with the inevitable consequence of wasteful bureaucracy and the 'business model' of management—to the detriment of the church's assigned purpose of proclaiming the good news (becoming part of God's spirit Kingdom), and nourishing the flock. There are denominations which languish under authoritarian leadership, more concerned with image and power and control and buildings to the neglect of preparation of the brethren for witness and for eternity."

Another colleague of mine in the Church of God ministry, Brian Convery, in reference to the Laodicean era of the Church of God, recently wrote here in 'The Journal': "Think about how shameful this church's behaviour is that He, the Head of the Body, has been thrown out. It is a spiritually headless church for the most part. He holds out hope, however, as a merciful Husband/Saviour, that some will still repent and come out of her and be part of His body in a healthy and functioning way. Remember, He is about to puke it out. Thieves and robbers have taken over some of the sheepfolds, brethren. It's very likely you are in one. I hope not. He is no longer working through the collective body but is calling to His sheep, who have in many cases been scattered far and wide while fleeing from these abominations. The vast majority, however, will not hear Him."

Yes, almost all of the Church of God has been deceived into looking to a man, or men, as the source of their belief, rather than directly to the words of Jesus Christ, but the deceived seemingly love to have it so. Jeremiah 5:26-31,

*"Among my people are the wicked who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch people. Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit : they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not seek justice. They do not promote the case of the fatherless; they do not defend the just cause of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?" declares the Lord. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"*

*"A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and **my people love it this way**. But what will you do in the end?"*

God has promised us that if we tolerate any man or men who attempt to rule or influence His Church in defiance of Jesus Christ's words, we in effect fall into idolatry through our spiritual adultery. We have set up an idol in our heart, instead of looking directly to Jesus Christ and His word, so He will lead that prophet into error, and both he and those deceived will fall into punishment.

Ezekiel 14: 2-4, 7, 9-10 *'And the word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them? Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: **Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block***

*of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols.’ ....For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet **to consult me through him**, I the Lord will answer him myself. ... And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, **I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet**, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. And they shall bear their punishment —**the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike**— that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord God.”*

James McBride continued in his article: “All, however, is not lost! Dotted around the world are many local churches—each nourishing a band of warriors being trained in the art of spiritual guerrilla warfare by faithful pastors and teachers, each enrolled to spearhead the good news by means of their unique spiritual gifts within their sphere of influence.”

James is correct in that there are now many independent local churches which have fled the large corporations with their quite visible dominion, but Jesus equally warned us of the more subtle form of dominion, not so easily recognised, where God’s people are persuaded by their ministers to retain traditions within the church which conflict with the word of God and are at odds with the pattern and example set by Christ Himself for our elucidation. 1 Peter 2:21, ‘*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.***’ Mark 7:7,13, 7, ‘*In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men, thus **making void the word of God by your tradition** that you have handed down. And many such things you do.*”

*Well meaning*, such ministers may be, but their priorities are wrong and evil idolatry in God’s sight, bringing punishment upon themselves and their flocks, along with that prophesied result we read of in Ezekiel. Does that mean they are no longer God’s Church? Read again the first three chapters of Revelation. God still counts those churches, many of whom had similar faults, as His Churches, though as Brian pointed out, the last of them had forced Christ out. (cf. Ezekiel 8:1-6)

So, with a mind open to the scriptures, it can be seen that many of God’s people are in great spiritual danger and Christ repeatedly calls all of His people in the churches to overcome the false apostles, false teachers and their doctrines; coldness, luke-warmness and lack of love, as well as the dominion of the Nicolaitians, which is idolatry if we allow it.

It is hard for some of God’s people to recognise this idolatry, for we fight against the subtle influence of the great deceiver (Read our article, ‘Me, an Idolater?’). Satan makes his deceptions sound quite biblical and knows better than to make them blatant. Many of the large corporate churches produce effective television and excellent and informative literature and magazines. I find their news gathering services very valuable myself. At first glance there is no sign of idolatry. It’s only when a person becomes involved, that one is likely to become aware of what James McBride referred to as “the lust for power and control”, the requirement to believe all that is taught, or risk banishment. Any questioning of established doctrine is discouraged, biblical submissions simply ignored and persistent questioners disfellowshipped.

The results of taking up this evil idol we saw in its earliest appearance in the WCG, where the fraudulent use of the term ‘government of God’ brought about its deception, rapid decline and extreme departure from all it had ever believed. The same idolatrous dominion though, still based on

that same fraudulent use, was carried over into the main fragments of the WCG and so they inherited its prophetic mistakes, apparently unaware of God's promises to deceive the prophet who takes an idol into his heart, let alone one who makes himself an idol, ruling by his own authority, Jeremiah 5:31, *'The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?'* NIV.

The most dangerous result of this idolatry though, is that which we saw described in Ezekiel 14:2-4, 7, 9-10. Those who take this idol into their hearts (accepting it by their continued presence) will find an unavoidable result. The prophet himself will be deceived by the Lord and the punishment of the prophet and those who accept his deception shall be the same. Prophecy about God's requirements of His people during the coming End Time – the last seven years as we will see, has as a result become totally divorced from what is clearly revealed in the pages of the Bible, and by following the current COG understanding, God's people in the Israelite nations have been so far diverted from God's instructions that they will become trapped in their nations and have no chance to either prove themselves faithful and obedient to His word or to escape the Great Tribulation.

Let us therefore carefully examine what the Bible says about the Seven Seals of Revelation, which provide the entire structure of the chronology of the last seven years.

It is generally accepted that the first four Seals of Revelation chapter six are described by Christ in Matthew 24:4-8. They are, as we know, false religion, war, famine and pestilence. The Fifth Seal is clearly about the martyrdom of the saints, verse 9, *'Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.'* Notice Christ warns us here that false prophets will deceive many (even about this Seal ?) verse 11, *'And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.'* This persecution continues throughout the *'tribulation of those days,'* which comprises the Seals prior to verse 29, *'Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,'*

You may see a pilcro mark in your Bible at verse 29, indicating a subject break. (¶) God is indicating here a difference between the *'tribulation of those days'*, the first Five Seals, and the Great Tribulation which is yet to come *after* the Sixth Seal.

Putting aside the digression for a while which occurs at the end of the Fifth Seal, let us go directly to the Sixth Seal, introduced in Revelation 6:12-14, *'And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.'* Here again we see the heavenly signs introduced which we read about in Matthew 24:29. We read of the very same heavenly signs in Joel 2:30-31, *'And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.'* Notice the very next event, still part of the Sixth Seal, and the next verse, 32, *'And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.'* Here is the deliverance of the Saints, which we also read of in Matthew 24:30-31, *'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound*

*of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'*

The heavenly signs and the deliverance of the Saints in the first resurrection comprise the Sixth Seal. The Kings of the earth and all men tremble at the sight of the arrival of Christ, who sits on that throne upon the Sea of Glass (cf Ezekiel Chapter 1:26), for they are fully aware that this is the sign of God's coming wrath – the Great Tribulation, which they had been warned about previously as we will see. Revelation 6:15-16, *'And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'*

This is not the scenario taught in the Churches of God, where Christ arrives for His Saints not at the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal before the Great Tribulation, but at the end of the Seventh Seal, after the Great Tribulation.

Notice the last verse of the Sixth Seal, Revelation 6:17, *'For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?'* Very few people will survive the 3 ½ years of the Seventh Seal, which is the Great Tribulation, Isaiah 24:6, *'Therefore has the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell in it are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.'* We see the Great Tribulation mentioned in Revelation 7:14, *'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'* The Great Tribulation then, is the Seventh Seal which is not opened until chapter 8, but as we have seen the resurrection of the Saints has already occurred at the Sixth Seal !

Here is the great deception which was occasioned by the introduction of *'the image of jealousy'*, the *'image of the beast'*, the fraudulent 'Government of God' into God's church. Here also is the cause of all the bitter fruits many of us have experienced, as well as the completely false belief that the resurrection occurs at the end of the Seventh Seal.

Further confirmation of this quite separate earlier timing of the resurrection is found in Revelation 14:14-15, *'And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.'* Sounds rather familiar? Here is Christ, once again arriving in the clouds, ready to gather in His firstfruit harvest of the Saints.

Notice this occurs BEFORE the harvest of the Great tribulation – a quite separate and *later* harvest, verses 18-20, *'And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy 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. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.'*

Do you grasp the import of what we have read so far, directly from God's Word?

Most of God's people are expecting a 3 ½ year tribulation, starting with the church fleeing to a place in Jordan where they will be protected until the resurrection, Revelation 12:14, *'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.'* They are led to

believe that this event will be signalled by the events of Daniel 11:41-42, *'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 the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.'* And Matthew 24:15, *'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:).'*

Sadly, anyone following that false scenario will be unable to travel then, because international travel for all civilians will become quite impossible almost 3 ½ years earlier when America and Britain are brought down and the world wars of the Second Seal commence, Revelation 6:4, *'And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.'* Israel will be in captivity.

This is because, although the Great Tribulation lasts 3 ½ years, the 'tribulation of those days' (Matthew 24:29), the previous 5 Seals, also lasts 3 ½ years. Daniel 9:27, *'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 oblation 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.'* And Daniel 8:13-14, *'Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto **two thousand and three hundred days**; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.'* This is when the same King of the South who invades the 'glorious land' at the 3 ½ year point with his armies, first arrives there after making a league or compact with Israel with just a token force, at the request of its government, after America, Israel's protector falls, and the Arabs attack. Daniel 11:23, *'And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.'* Read Daniel 9:23-24 to see that much happens during the first 5 Seals, as the King of the South, or Beast, gradually takes control in Israel.

Instead, God gives His people quite specific clear instructions to flee before the US and Britain, who have acted as Babylon fall. Revelation 18:4, *'And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'* This occurs some 220 days after God reaches the whole world with a clear warning of what will happen until Christ returns, and the need to repent. Revelation 14:5-6, *'And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and **to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.**'* Where we are to go, and what God requires us to do, you can read on our End Time Tab. Jeremiah 5:31, *'The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?'* But will you still be carrying that idol?

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