

How The Church Of The Apostles Was Hijacked By Rome

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Book of Revelation

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Bible Text: Revelation 12; 2 Corinthians 11:14

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Revelation, the 12th chapter. We're going to read it and this will be kind of a review of the chapter, seeing where we are historically in the book of Revelation and bring us up to speed on some of the history that we're looking at. So this will be redemptive historical preaching and this will be certainly historical and, Lord willing, redemptive as well. Revelation 12, we'll begin in the first verse.

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 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. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 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.

Chapter 12 covers approximately the first 400 years of the New Testament church and its persecution primarily by the Roman Empire. The great red dragon, of course, is Satan but it's also Satan in one of his earthly manifestations which is the pagan Roman Empire. The pagan Roman Empire before Constantine. Now this is the view of many theologians such as Matthew Henry and Thomas Goodwin and many others. In chapter 13, we're going to see Satan in another form as the antichrist, that is, a false church pretending to be the church of Christ, having great political power. That's what an antichrist, that's what antichrist is. It's not just an enemy of Christ, it is a church pretending to be Christ's church.

Before we continue into chapter 13, again, I'd like to bring us up to speed in the history of the time otherwise we're going to miss a great deal of what the Lord is teaching us and we'll learn some things in history about the Roman Empire in this period of time, but we don't learn in school about the history of the church and the Roman Empire but according to Scripture the history of the church is the key fact in all of history, that God's great concern is for his church and that the wars of nations and various other things revolve around the history of the church and all for the good of the church. So that's the way history needs to be studied. A recommendation for you is Johnathan Edwards' "A History of Redemption." I've got the title wrong but it's called "History of Redemption," the history of God's redemptive work and it's a marvelous marvelous book which I highly recommend to you.

During the first three centuries after Christ, Christianity spread far and wide. There were at least five principle reasons for this. First is the political reason. The Roman Empire was flourishing, the large and strongest empire the world has ever known. In Luke, there's a verse that says that the decree went out through all the world and it's talking about the Roman Empire and it refers to the Roman Empire as being all the world. So this is all, basically that Rome considered itself the world and in a sense it was, it was pretty much all the civilized world. The Roman Empire was the largest, the strongest empire the world had ever known.

Now most people don't realize how big the Roman Empire at its height was so I'm going to read you a list and just visualize these countries. At its height, the Roman Empire encompassed the countries we know today as England, Wales, France, Monaco, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, parts of Germany,

San Marino, Vatican City, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Andorra, Italy, Albania, central Europe including Bulgaria, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Hungary, Turkey, Armenia, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, part of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Azerbaijan, part of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, possibly Kuwait and Sudan. That's the Roman Empire at its height. So for the Lord to put Christianity, the birth of Christ, in the middle of this, imagine that. What a tremendous opportunity to spread the word of God.

The second reason for the spread of Christianity is that the Scriptures were translated into the languages of the Roman world.

Third, very active trade routes criss-crossed the empire. The merchants traveling back and forth enabled the gospel to spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Fourth, the dedication and zeal of the evangelists who fanned out across the empire were instrumental in quickly bringing thousands to the faith.

And finally, of course, the martyrs. Their heroic witness through persecution and unspeakably cruel tortures and deaths emboldened the Christians, inspired the others, and shocked the unsaved. So no more was that true than under the persecution of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, perhaps the bloodiest and most ruthless persecution in history of Christians. Diocletian declared "he would abolish the Christian name from the face of the earth." That was his goal.

In Fox's Book of Martyrs, Fox writes, "No distinction was made of age or sex; the name of Christian was so obnoxious to the pagans that all indiscriminately fell sacrifice to their opinions. Many houses were set on fire, and whole Christian families burned in the flames; others had stones fastened about their necks, and being tied together were driven into the sea. The persecution became general in all the Roman provinces, but more particularly in the east; and as it lasted ten years, it is impossible to ascertain the numbers martyred," now that's under Diocletian 10 years, "or to enumerate the various modes of martyrdom. Racks, scourges, swords, daggers, crosses, poison, and famine, were made use of in various parts to dispatch the Christians; and invention was exhausted," they couldn't think of any other more ways to do it, "to devise tortures against such people as had no crime, except thinking differently from superstition. A city of Phrygia, consisting entirely of Christians, was burnt, and all the inhabitants perished in the flames." But of course, Diocletian and the Roman Empire did not succeed in destroying Christianity, they only made it stronger.

Roman persecutions ended with the rise to power of the Emperor Constantine. He became emperor in 306 AD and he declared in 311 official toleration for Christianity in the Roman Empire. Now Constantine was the son of one of the original Caesars. At first he ruled only half of the Roman Empire, the Western half, but in 324 AD that system was abandoned and he ruled over a single united empire. He was nominally a Christian. He considered himself a Christian, we may not consider him a Christian, at least not one that

we're familiar with, but he did become emperor of Rome, as I said, in 306, and as a result to curry the favor of the emperor, people who were virtually all pagans, flocked into the Christian church, becoming church officials, bringing their gods and goddesses with them, baptizing them as saints of the church, they baptized their gods and goddesses as saints of the church. Their idols and their vestments and gold altars moved from pagan worship into the church, over time turning the church of the apostles into an imitation of paganism.

James Wylie said in his book, "History of Protestantism," "according to the uniform testimony of all the early historians, the faith which had maintained its purity and rigor in the humble sanctuaries and lowly position of the first, the apostolic age, and amid the fires of its pagan persecutors became corrupt and waxed feeble amid the gorgeous temples and the worldly dignitaries which imperial favor had lavished upon it." The Bible began to be hidden from the people and as the light of the gospel was obscured, the church through the priests, established itself as the source of truth. The doctrines of the Christian faith became whatever the Roman Church said they were.

Now Constantine moved the seat of government out of Rome to the city he built in Asia, Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey and that city was called Constantinople, today we know is at Istanbul. This opened the door when Constantine the emperor left Rome, took all the government officials and all the offices of the government to Constantinople, the Bishop of Rome could then, and his successors, could seize and consolidate political power to add to their ecclesiastical, church, power.

So this combination of power over the church and over the nations was a major force in world history for centuries. The Bishop of Rome who became known as the Pope, claimed not only to be the chief ruler of the only true church but also claimed to be the chief ruler of all the nations in the world. This claim to ultimate power over the church and of all nations still is signified today in the Vatican. For example, the Pope's tiara is a three-tiered crown, three crowns stacked on top of one another. The first crown represents kingship over the Papal States. Now the Pope lost the Papal States in the 1800s except for Vatican City, but he still keeps the crown showing his rulership over them. The second crown represents kingship over all nations of the world, meaning that the Pope's authority is superior to any king or president or prime minister or any national leader. They are only rulers of nations, but since Christ is the King of kings, his representative on earth, the Pope, is therefore the rightful ruler of every nation. Every world leader whether king, queen, president, whatever, is under his authority according to their theory. The third crown represents the Pope's alleged moral authority over all people of the world. Again, since Christ said that all power and authority belongs to him, therefore his representative on earth has and exercises that power and authority over all people of the world whether or not they are Roman Catholics. Today the Vatican does try to obscure the meaning of the tiara, they recently replaced it with a mitre, although they kept the symbolism of the three crowns in the Vatican flag and in the Vatican coat of arms. The tiara is still part of the Pope's wardrobe but for now it's kept in the closet until it's needed once again.

But let's go back to Constantine and the church. For the first time in history, the Roman Empire, the greatest empire the world had ever known, is now allied with the Christian church. This alliance is weak, though. In his book, "A Different Sort of Christian, A Different Sort of Christ: The Conversion of Constantine the Great," historian Stephen Murphy writes that although Constantine truly favored and venerated the Lord in his heart, he "had his own brand of Christianity." He said the type of Christianity that Constantine practiced and believed, however, retained several elements of paganism. The paganism and Christianity of the time were moving towards one another and this allowed several pagan elements of religion to remain after Constantine converted to Christianity. For example, Constantine continued to give money, subsidies, to pagan priests after his conversion to Christianity. He didn't wipe out, he didn't say, "We're going to wipe out all the paganism." Not at all. He believed in rituals more than he believed in doctrine and he still carried over beliefs from his former paganism such as approving public ceremonies in which magicians cast spells to heal the sick and read the future from the intestines of sheep. So remember what Mr. Murphy observed in his book as it will show itself to be of critical importance as we move through history. "The paganism and Christianity of the time were moving toward one another."

Now outside of the Roman Empire and on the fringes of this proto-Christian Roman Empire, Satan reigned through his instruments, through his people. Externally, these were the Barbarian tribes of Europe and Asia that would eventually conquer the Roman Empire, and internally, Satan's tools were actually people within the Roman Church itself as he infiltrated it and gradually turned the Roman Church into a persecutor of God's people. Far more effective than Diocletian or Nero ever dared to dream.

Please turn to Revelation 12 as we read, verse 13, "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." Now go to 17, "And the dragon was wrath," which is angry, "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 Roman Empire is nominally Christian, the woman being the New Testament church. The woman is nominally Christian. Satan has been dealt a severe blow. Is he finished? No, of course not. He lost a lot of his political power and some of his spiritual power when Constantine became emperor, a lot of his spiritual power too, but Satan was unable to destroy the New Testament church at its birth through persecution and mass murder, in fact the opposite happened, as we know, it grew through persecution and spread all over the empire.

So in the fourth century, Satan opens or at least greatly expands his war on a new front. Instead of concentrating his efforts on destroying the church from the outside with soldiers and murderers wielding swords, he'll now attempt to destroy it also from inside using apostates and heretics wielding false gospels. If you know anything about the history of the early church, they were ridden with heresies, I mean, just lists of various heresies. Now Satan does not abandon his external front. He's unable to use the Roman armies anymore against the church under Constantine, so he'll use pagan tribes and armies and eventually Islamic armies, beginning in 622 AD, Satan's Muslims of North Africa declared war on Christianity. But now he works diligently on these two fronts. The

internal front, however, within the church is a lot more insidious and operates below the radar. You know, it's obvious when a Muslim soldier proclaims glory to Allah, he's obviously an enemy of Christ. It's not obvious when the enemy is dressed in Christian clerical garb proclaiming glory to Christ. As we know in 2 Corinthians 11, Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. That's what we're going to see beginning in Revelation 13, how this works.

So instead of using the Imperial Roman Empire, the pagan Roman Empire, Satan now uses the religious or Papal Roman Empire. Pagan Rome is depicted as a beast, an animal, in Scripture. It was animalistic. It conquered everything in its way by just sheer force. It was primarily a political power, not a religious one. Papal Rome is both a political and a religious power. It claims to be the true church of Christ outside of which there is no salvation. It imitates the bride of Christ. It's depicted in the book of Revelation as an animal, as a beast, and also as a prostitute. On the other hand, the real bride of Christ is depicted in Revelation 12 as a woman, a virtuous woman who flees from Satan's attacks into the spiritual wilderness.

So we have to remember that history, the reason we study history because history reveals prophecy. We can go back and look at prophecy and say, "Oh yeah, now I see. That was the Protestant Reformation. That was the persecution under Rome. It all fits together so beautifully." So history reveals prophecy.

You know, once the church in Rome was a house church with a pastor, the same church Paul wrote to in his epistle to the Romans. When that house church grew, another house church was created, then another, and they had different pastors probably. We don't know much about that but we can presume that's the case. The pastors of those churches eventually got together and they formed what we would call the Presbytery of Rome. It comes from the Greek word presbuteros which is in the Bible. It means presbytery or presbyter. And somewhere along the line, though, they went off track. They decided to model the church along the hierarchy of the Roman Empire and their first step was to allow one of their number, one of their pastors, probably the oldest and wisest member of the presbytery to assume the newly created office of head of the presbytery of Rome.

Now we don't have heads of presbyteries, it's not biblical, but they decided to do that. They called him the Bishop of Rome. Now bishop is a title that can be used. It means the same as elder, it's just another title. The word bishop is a proper translation of the Greek word episkopos, that's where we get episcopal, which appears in the New Testament four times. For example in 1 Timothy 3:2, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife." It's translated into English as bishop from the King James. Bishop, elder, pastor, it's all the same office. This is clearly seen in Acts 20:17 and also in Acts 28:17. First Acts 20:17, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders," or presbuteros, presbyters, "of the church. And when they came to him, he said to them," verse 28, "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers," the word there is episkopos, bishops, "to care for," poimen, pastor or shepherd, "the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son." So all three terms, elder, bishop, overseer and pastor/shepherd, all refer to the same persons.

So a pastor is a bishop, an elder. It does talk about different functions so it depends on how when the word is used, it's a different function. When it's a rulership/overseer type of function it's one, but they're all descriptive terms defining what ministers do. Elders provide wise counsel and guidance. There are bishops, that is, overseers who provide leadership to the church. Both the local church and with overseers from other local churches, they meet together to make decisions on church matters. They're pastors or shepherds, same thing. They guard their flock from heresies and other attacks upon it. So it all depends on how the Bible, is what's the Bible stressing, what role is the Bible stressing. But the Presbytery of Rome unbiblically changed the meaning of the title of bishop making it the leader of the presbytery. What happened next tells us why the Lord never intended for the church to have individual elders in authority over others, individual elders of authority. It wasn't long before the deference and authority given to this new Bishop of Rome head of the presbytery began to go to his head. When Constantine moved the capital of the empire from Rome to his new city of Constantinople in modern Turkey, the Bishop of Rome moved into this vacuum of leadership. He became, in essence, the co-Roman Emperor. Constantine encouraged that. He declared that all decisions made by the Bishop of Rome in disputes... well, to be fair he said all decisions made by the church, the Bishop of Rome came later, but all decisions made by the church and with the Bishop of Rome as its head, in disputes among its members, were final, Constantine said, could not be reviewed or changed by civil judges. There's a tremendous step in history, the first step in the Roman church taking over civil political power. The emperor said any decisions that the church led by the Bishop of Rome makes could not be reviewed or changed by civil judges.

The next step was to organize, as I said, the church along the lines of the Roman Empire. The empire had four vice-regents, they were called prefects, who ruled under Emperor Constantine. The church copied that and divided the civilized world, the Roman Empire, ecclesiastically into four divisions or dioceses with a bishop ruling over each one. So again, the church of the first few centuries had been a fellowship of brothers just as Christ had established it, now it became a copy of the military dictatorship of the Roman Empire run by a hierarchy of officers. The church of the first few centuries following the Bible had but two classes of officers: deacon and elder. Now the officers took upon themselves titles of nobility not found in Scripture for the ministers of Christ's church such as priest, monsignor, which means "my lord," which includes protonotary apostolic or protonotaries of number, prelates of honor to his holiness the Pope, that's one office, chaplain to his holiness, diocesan bishop, coadjutor bishop, auxiliary bishop, titular bishop, suffragan bishop, archbishop, metropolitan bishop, vicars capitular, vicar general, administrator sede vacante. And by the way, these are all titles that are still in the Roman Church as some are not used but they're still, they still exist. Apostolic vicars, apostolic prefects, apostolic administrators, exarch, primate, cardinal deacon, cardinal priest, cardinal bishop, cardinal protopriest, cardinal protodeacon, cardinal in pectore, secret cardinal, cardinal protector, major archbishop, patriarch, pope. These are all titles that they came up with for church officers instead of deacon and elder. They accepted being called such divine titles as Your Eminence, Your Beatitude, Your Excellency, Your Holiness, Holy Father. Of course, Scripture doesn't know anything about these titles or

these offices. They're sheer inventions pandering to man's pride. You see, before the ministers of Christ's church were esteemed for their faithfulness, for their learning, for their Christ-like spirit, now they were esteemed for what titles they had.

In addition to this plethora of titles, the ministers brought these pagan rites and ceremonies into the church. This is when the church took on the outward trappings of the pagan priests. To the simple worship of the early apostolic church was added graven images, bowings, kneelings, candles, golden altars, robes, feast days, what some people call smells and bells, the incense and the bells. The Scottish Reformer, George Gillespie, wrote, "Augustine complaining of some ceremonies wherewith the church in his time was burdened, thought it altogether best that they should be cut off even if they may not seem inimical to the faith, since they pressed slavish burdens on the religion Christ willed to be a free one. Yea, he thought this yoke of servitude greater bondage and less tolerable than the servility of the Jews because they were subject to the burdens of the law of God and not to the presumptions of men." In other words, Augustine who was admired by the Roman Church but Augustine said he certainly would not agree with them. Augustine said at least the legal burdens of the Jews was put upon them by God and not by men as these new burdens were. So these are even worse.

So they eventually began donning lavish robes, they ate only the most delicate and costly foods, they gave sumptuous banquets, they received the bowings, kneelings of men in front of them, they sat on a throne, they were carried around on a litter or platform. You've probably seen the Pope carried around like that, like some worldly pagan potentate. The emperor called the Bishop of Rome Father, which didn't help. People bowed down to him, praised his piety and holiness, asked his advice, obeyed his directive, kissed his ring, kneeled before him to beg favors, gave him contributions. Eventually basically what happened is the Bishop of Rome became indistinguishable from a modern Mafia godfather. Think about the parallels. You know, it says a lot that the most recent, annual, American cardinal's dinner, which is a big fundraiser for the church, last April was held in that holy city, Las Vegas.

So the Roman Bishop's pride became inflated to such a degree that he eventually claimed precedence over all these other bishops. Remember there were four bishops they divided up like the Roman Empire. Well, he eventually said, "Hey, I'm the chief of these four." The Bishop of Rome went from being the pastor of a church to the head of the presbytery, which is again an unbiblical office, to eventually lord it over other churches, to then claim that he was the head of Christ's church, and that all the other churches and bishops must bow to him. That was the cause of the eventual split between the Western and Eastern churches which still exists today, is they are known as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. You know, Rome claims that Luther and the Protestant Reformation were, you know, were the big church split. It happened long before that. They forget about the Eastern Church leaving the Western Church and becoming the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Reverend J. A. Wylie in his book "The History of Protestantism" writes, "Apostasy is like the descent of heavy bodies, it proceeds with ever-accelerating velocity. First, lamps were

lighted at the tombs of the martyrs; next, the Lord's Supper was celebrated at their graves; next, prayers were offered/or them and to them; next, paintings and images began to disfigure the walls, and corpses to pollute the floors of the churches." They used to bring in dead bodies and display them in church. "Baptism, which apostles required water only to dispense, could not be celebrated without white robes and chrism," which is perfumed olive oil, "milk, honey, and salt. Then came a crowd of church officers whose names and numbers are in striking contrast to the few and simple orders of men who were employed in the first propagation of Christianity. There were sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, choristers, and porters; and as work must be found for this motley host of laborers, there came to be fasts and exorcisms; there were lamps to be lighted, altars to be arranged, and churches to be consecrated; there was the Eucharist to be carried to the dying; and there were the dead to be buried, for which a special order of men was set apart. When one looked back to the simplicity of early times, it could not but amaze one to think what a cumbrous array of curious machinery and costly furniture was now needed for the service of Christianity. Not more stinging than true was the remark that 'when the Church had golden chalices she had wooden priests.'"

So eventually and we're just rocketing through history here, the Bible was hidden away, chained in monastery libraries, kept in Latin which is a language only known to some scholars, the Church forbid it to be translated into languages that people could read as we've talked about, the people were taught fables instead of the gospel, superstition instead of the word of God, they were baptized, they recited written prayers, they stood up and kneeled down when they were told to do so all in the name of Christ, thinking they were worshiping God but without the gospel their hearts were far from him. Wylie again said, "folded them within her pale, but they were scarcely more Christian than before, while she," the Church, "was greatly less so. From the sixth century downwards Christianity was a mongrel system, made up of pagan rites revived from classic times, of superstitions imported from the forests of Northern Germany, and of Christian beliefs and observances which continued to linger in the Church from primitive and purer times. The inward power of religion was lost; and it was in vain that men strove to supply its place by the outward form. They nourished their piety not at the living fountains of truth, but with the 'beggarly elements' of ceremonies and relics, of consecrated lights and holy vestments."

You know, looking, Wylie again, "Looking back at this stage to the change which had come over the Church, we cannot fail to see that its deepest originating cause must be sought, in the inability of the world to receive the gospel in all its greatness." In other words, why did this happen to the church? Because the world could not receive the gospel in its true meaning. It was too mighty and too free to be easily understood or credited by man. The world wasn't ready for it.

"A good so immense, so complete in its nature, and so boundless in its extent, he could not believe that God would bestow without money and without price; there must be conditions or qualifications. So he reasoned. And hence it is that the moment inspired men cease to address us, and that their disciples and scholars take their place — men of apostolic spirit and doctrine, no doubt, but without the direct knowledge of their

predecessors — we become sensible of a change; an eclipse has passed upon the exceeding glory of the Gospel. As we pass from Paul to Clement, and from Clement to the Fathers that succeeded him, we find the Gospel becoming less of grace and more of merit." Less of grace and more of merit, more of works. "The light wanes as we travel down the Patristic road, and remove ourselves farther in time from the Apostolic dawn. It continues for some time at least to be the same Gospel, but its glory is shorn, its mighty force is abated; and we are reminded of the change that seems to pass upon the sun, when after contemplating him in a tropical hemisphere, we see him in a northern sky." You know, in the tropics the sun is bright and brilliant. You go up to Canada and farther north and it's dimmer. It's not as brilliant. So we are reminded of the change that seems to pass upon the sun, "where his slanting beams," in the northern climates, "force their way through mists and vapors, are robbed of half their splendor. Seen through the fogs of the Patristic age, the Gospel scarcely looks the same which had burst upon the world without a cloud but a few centuries before."

"This disposition — that of making God less free in His gift, and man less dependent in the reception of it: the desire to introduce the element of," works, "merit on the side of man, and the element of condition on the side of God," well, if I do this for God, he'll do this for me. You know, God, I'll make a bargain with God. Unbiblical. This "operated at last in opening the door for the pagan principle to creep back into the Church. A change of a deadly and subtle kind passed upon the worship. Instead of being the spontaneous thanksgiving and joy of the soul, that no more evoked or repaid the blessings which awakened that joy than the odors which the flowers exhale are the cause of their growth, or the joy that kindles in the heart of man when the sun rises is the cause of his rising — worship, we say, from being the expression of the soul's emotions, was changed into a rite, a rite akin to those of the Jewish temples, and still more akin to those of the Greek mythology, a rite in which lay couched a certain amount of human merit and inherent efficacy, that partly created, partly applied the blessings with which it stood connected. This was the moment," Wylie says, "when the pagan virus inoculated the Christian institution."

"The change brought a lot of other changes. Worship was transformed into sacrifice, called the sacrifice of the Mass, a sacrifice in which his expiation and purification — the 'teaching ministry' was converted into a 'sacrificing priesthood.' Now once this had been done, there was no going back, a boundary had been reached which couldn't be crossed until centuries had rolled away."

That's a very brief history but it's history we need to know. As I said earlier, history unveils prophecy. We can look at historical events and see how they are prophesied in history even down to the very day. Do you remember the sermon of prophecy fulfilled the exact day in history we saw that.

To finish up here, the gospel was paganized, as we said, to a works gospel which is the worst thing that happened. Rather than the just to live by faith Scripture says, and for grace are you saved by faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast, Ephesians 2:8-9. The paganized church began to teach that salvation consists of faith plus works, that good works play an active role in salvation.

That's the opposite of the gospel. But the Lord preserved a remnant for himself as he always has, his few covenant people that refused to soil themselves with this paganism. Maybe they remembered the faithful Israelites about whom Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 1:9, "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been as Gomorrah." The remnant of Israel and such are escaped of the house of Jacob shall stay upon the Lord, the holy one of Israel in truth.

I want to finish with a quote by Thomas Watson. Thomas Watson says, "In Psalm 83 the saints of God are called his hidden ones. Why? Not only because they are hid in God's decree and hid in Christ's wounds but oftentimes God hides them in a time of danger and calamity. He reserved to himself 7,000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal. The prophet knew not where there was one, but God knew there were 7,000."

So we may and do appear to lose battles but even in defeat the church is always victorious.

Let's go to him in prayer.