

THE FALL OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES



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Abstract

God used the churches and denominations as His divine organism to penetrate the world with the Gospel, which is the Bible. This began on Pentecost, which occurred on May 22 in AD 33 and lasted until May 21 1988, the day before Pentecost. However, after a few short decades from that very auspicious beginning, God revealed various doctrinal problems that had surfaced within those fledgling congregations (Revelation chapters 2 and 3). Since they abandoned God and “*knew not God*” (Acts 13:27) in large part, God abandoned them.

The Bible declares in 1 Pet 4:17 that “... *judgment must begin at the house of God...*” Notwithstanding, God would continue to utilize the churches and denominations for His own purposes for 1955 years from Pentecost in AD 33 until May 21, 1988, which coincided with the start of the “*Great Tribulation.*”

That period lasted for 23 years, or 8400 days, and was also known as the time of “*Great Affliction,*” during which God brought judgment upon all churches and denominations worldwide and without exception. God officially stopped using His divine organism, as He had done previously with the nation of Israel, and handed them over to Satan.

God had actually been “married” to national Israel for 1480 years from its Exodus out of Egypt, but on Friday, April 1, AD 33 when Christ hung on the Cross, the veil of the Temple was torn in half from top to bottom, thus signaling God’s judgment upon His corporate “bride.”

Both Israel as well as the New Testament churches and denominations were judged on May 21, 1988 for succumbing to “*high places,*” or false doctrines – including a serious misunderstanding of the “true” Gospel – which they both insisted on maintaining. That ensured their downfall, as God had warned again and again throughout Scripture.

Additionally, this paper addresses the popular objection to the concept that God finished utilizing the New Testament churches and denominations.

Key words: “high places,” false doctrines, *Great Tribulation*, *Great Affliction*

Introduction

This treatise explains what the Bible teaches about how and when God ended His usage of the New Testament churches and denominations in order to better understand the timing of God's overall plan of salvation and judgment. The rise of the New Testament churches began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (May 22, AD 33) according to Acts 2, and they spread throughout the world, as the Lord Jesus announced to His apostles in Acts 1:7-8¹: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

This was when the Holy Spirit was poured out as Jesus had foretold them. **(Appendix A)**

Problems At The Start

In spite of the promising start of the New Testament churches, God informs us that there were serious problems in those seven churches, which are located historically in what is now Turkey. These churches symbolized **all** of the churches and denominations during the **entire church age** (which lasted for 1955 years from May 22, AD 33 to May 21, 1988) and not any **one** particular church or denomination. Consider the solemn warnings that God spells out for each of them:

Rev 2:1 and 4-5 announce: *Unto the angel of **the church of Ephesus** write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks... {4} Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. {5} Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Notice the admonition to repent for having forsaken their "first love" and the consequences for doing so by the removal of their "candlestick," thus indicating that God would abandon them.

Rev 2:8-9 continues: *And unto the angel of **the church in Smyrna** write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; {9} I know thy works, and*

¹ All verses in this study are taken from the Authorized (King James) Version. The words in brackets [...] were added by the translators. The words in brackets beginning with "that is" [i.e., ...] were added by the author for explanation purposes.

tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and [I know] the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Once again they are being reproved because in their midst are those who are not “true Jews” (in the sense of Rom 2:29), and thus Satan was still their spiritual father.

And Rev 2:11, 14 and 16 provide this admonition: *And to the angel of **the church in Pergamos** write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges... {14} But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication... {16} Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

The early congregations had problems with fornication (both spiritual and physical) and idol sacrifice; and therefore, they were commanded to repent or be slain by the Word of God and fall under God’s judgment.

Rev 2:18 and 20-23 likewise describe: *And unto the angel of **the church in Thyatira** write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass... {20} Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. {21} And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. {22} Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. {23} And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts [i.e., one’s innermost thoughts]; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

That assembly also was plagued by a variety of sins, and yet did not repent, and thus came under God’s wrath as well.

God continued His assessment in Rev 3:1-3, *And unto the angel of **the church in Sardis** write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. {2} Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. {3} Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

Sadly, that church, too, was commanded to repent and did not.

Rev 3:7a, 8 and 11 further acknowledge: *And to the angel of **the church in Philadelphia** write... {8} I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name... {11} Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

That church had “*little strength*,” which pointed to the “*few*” who really possessed the “*power of God*” (i.e., salvation), Who is Christ. Thus, as an institution, they were not “*held fast*” by Christ, and subsequently came under condemnation.

Lastly, Rev 3:14-19 adds, *And unto the angel of **the church of the Laodiceans** write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; {15} I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. {16} So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. {17} Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: {18} I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. {19} As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Judgment Began At The House Of God

Unlike national Israel, whom God actually divorced,² God simply abandoned the churches and denominations as His “divine organism,” which He had previously established. This highlights a monumental truth: Even a “divine organism” can be the object of God’s wrath, when that institution assumes a role that is superior to the Word of God. This is exactly what happened with the New Testament churches, and they fell into the same trap that Israel did.

All throughout the Bible, God had given warnings that disobedience would incur God’s curses, even as obedience results in His blessings. (Read Deuteronomy 28 for an example). Thus, when we read a passage like 1 Pet 4:17, and its Old Testament counterpart, Jer 25:29a, we should not be surprised that God – in spite of His magnanimous patience – brings His divine justice to bear. Ultimately, this meant that salvation was no longer viable within the churches and denominations because the

² Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8

Holy Spirit was no longer “*in their midst*” to apply salvation to the elect, even though it would still be available for those outside in the world until May 21, 2011.

1 Pet 4:17 declares, *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Please note where judgment begins, and where it ends.

Likewise Jer 25:29a and 8-11 teach: ... *For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city [i.e., Jerusalem as a picture of the churches and denominations] which is called by my name. {8} Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard [i.e., obeyed] my words, {9} Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, [i.e., he typifies Satan – see Isa 14] and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. {11} And this whole land shall be a desolation, [and] an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*

This amazing citation is in the Old Testament. It is the equivalent of 1 Pet 4:17, and foreshadows the Great Tribulation of our day, when Satan would be given total control of all the churches and denominations. Notice how God refers to “*Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon,*” as “*my servant,*” thus highlighting the fact that anybody and everything is at God’s disposal to use as He pleases.

Eze 9:1-6 continues the same refrain: *He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city [i.e., Jerusalem] to draw near, even every man [with] his destroying weapon in his hand. {2} And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them [was] clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. {3} And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which [had] the writer’s inkhorn by his side; {4} And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men [i.e., typifying the elect] that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. {5} And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: {6} Slay utterly old [and] young, both maids, and little children, and*

women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at **my sanctuary**. Then they began at the ancient men which [were] before **the house**.

In this ominous passage God continues to reiterate where His judgment must first take place: “my sanctuary” and “the house.”

God Handed The Churches Over To Satan During The Great Tribulation

Four passages succinctly demonstrate that God transferred the “reins” of the New Testament churches (not the eternal Body of Christ) from the Lord Jesus Christ to Satan, because as we shall see, it was His purpose and will for this to take place; and, as mentioned previously, this marked the beginning of the Great Tribulation:³

Isa 14:12-14 acknowledges, How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning [how] art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! {13} For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: {14} I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Here we see the arrogance and foolish pride of a fallen angel who desired to be God, and is destined to be destroyed forever. Notice the “I”s, as well as the word “sit” (or “rule”) “upon the mount of the congregation,” which along with the term, “in the sides of the north,” points to the churches and denominations.

³ Family Stations, Inc, 2003; Harold Camping, *The End Of The Church Age And After*; pgs. 72-73. Partial list of places in the Bible that speak of the Great Tribulation: Genesis 45, in which God tells of the famine in Joseph’s day that caused his father Jacob to go into the land of Egypt. The strange account of Judges 19, which describes the killing of the concubine by the men of Benjamin. A great many chapters in the Book of Isaiah. A great many chapters in the Book of Jeremiah. Almost all of the Book of Lamentations. Many of the first 39 chapters of Ezekiel. Daniel 7, Daniel 8, Daniel 11, and Daniel 12. Portions of the Book of Hosea. Almost all of the Book of Joel. Much of the Book of Amos. Portions of the Book of Micah. Much of the Book of Nahum. Much of the Book of Habakkuk. Parts of the Book of Zechariah, Matthew 24, and Mark 13. Parts of Luke 17. Chapter 6. Time No. 2. The Great Tribulation 73 Luke 21. The last seven chapters of the Book of Acts. II Thessalonians 2. Revelation 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, and 20.

And in 2 Thes 2:3-4 we see that God sanctioned this event, in order to judge His corporate people, Satan's desire notwithstanding: *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin [i.e., Satan] be revealed, the son of perdition; {4} Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

Finally, the Devil received that which he had longed for – that is, to rule over all the unsuspecting churches and denominations worldwide. This same event is described as “*the abomination of desolation*” in Mat 24:15 and refers the reader back to the book of Daniel.

Mat 24:15-22 warns, *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:) {16} Then let them which be in Judaea [i.e., typifying the churches and denominations] flee into the mountains [i.e., “mountains” refer spiritually to “kingdoms” and specifically in this verse, to the kingdom of God]: {17} Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: {18} Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. {19} And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! {20} But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: {21} For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. {22} And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

In this marvelous portion of Scripture, God carefully takes us back to the book of Daniel to help us discover the truth about the nature and timing of the “*abomination of desolation*.” We read in Dan 8:13-14, 12:1, and 8-11:

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. {14} And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed... {12:1} And at that time shall Michael [i.e., who represented Christ] stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book... {8} And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what [shall be] the end of these [things]? {9} And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. {10} Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly:

and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. {11} And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, [there shall be] a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

At the beginning of the Great Tribulation (which commenced on May 21, 1988), God began to reveal the information that was sealed up in the book of Daniel. **(Appendix B)**

The Veil Of The Temple Was Torn From Top To Bottom

We read about the veil of the Temple (that separated the “holy of holies” from the rest of the Temple) being torn from top to bottom in the following Gospel accounts, when Christ hung on the Cross on Passover Friday, April 1, AD 33. Mat 27:51 records, *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

This event signified that God had officially divorced Himself from national Israel: they would no longer be His chosen people; the Temple would no longer be the “holy place;” and Jerusalem would no longer be the “holy city.” **(Appendix C)**

A Serious Misunderstanding Of The Gospel

It is noteworthy that a serious misunderstanding regarding the true nature of the Gospel also existed in both the nation of Israel as well as in the New Testament churches and denominations. This problem can be best summarized as a “works plus grace” gospel. In other words, they did not recognize that God does **all** the work of salvation for His chosen people (i.e., the elect). That process of “predestination” actually began before the foundation of the world.

All those (apart from the elect) within national Israel as well as the institutional churches and denominations, were guilty of this sin. For example, national Israel attempted to gain access into Heaven by misconstruing the true nature of circumcision which God had commanded them to observe. Sadly, they felt that all they had to do was merely perform the outward physical act, and it would suffice. In doing so, they were walking “*by sight*” not “*by faith*,” as 2 Cor 5:7 underscores: (*For we walk by faith, not by sight*.)

They failed to see the spiritual aspect that God is always pointing to, with regard to circumcision as Rom 2:28-29 spells out:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: {29} 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.

In their spiritual blindness, they missed the clear admonition of Deu 10:16, which should have compelled them to investigate the meaning of that perplexing command: *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*

If they had searched out that issue in the Old Testament, they would have discovered in Deu 30:6 that God had the solution all along: *And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

In similar fashion, many New Testament church pastors and elders (and the seminaries that spawned them) utilized water baptism, church membership, and other means (“accepting Christ,” the “sinner’s prayer,” “walking forward,” “the Lord’s supper,” etc.) to assure their members that they were truly “born again.” The reason for this is simple: the church leaders wanted tangible evidence to reinforce the notion that as a result of their outward actions they were guaranteed eternal life instead of trusting God’s Word implicitly that God might save them in His own timing, and according to His divine election program, which the “natural” (i.e., unsaved) man greatly disdains.

Many “High Places” (Or Scriptural Violations)

God chronicles many of the “High Places,” or Scriptural violations of Old Testament Israel, as the succeeding verses illustrate in their historical context. However, these same verses are a spiritual reflection of what transpired in the churches and denominations throughout the church age, in which many adopted a misplaced trust in the churches and denominations themselves instead of the Bible alone:

Jer 7:1-11 explains, *The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, {2} Stand in the gate of the LORD’S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all [ye] of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.*

{3} Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. {4} Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, [are] these. {5} For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; {6} If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: {7} Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. {8} Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. {9} Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; {10} And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? {11} Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen [it], saith the LORD.

A similar statement is referenced in Luke 19:41-46 in which God predicts the fall of the New Testament churches.

Luke 19:41-46 states, And when he was come near, he beheld the city [i.e., Jerusalem], and wept over it, {42} Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things [which belong] unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. {43} For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, {44} And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. {45} And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; {46} Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Furthermore God insists that many of these so-called “leaders” in the congregation were never sent by God, but merely assumed that role. Jer 23:1-2 ominously warns, *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. {2} Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.*

God continues His indictment of national Israel, and by extension, the churches and denominations, by exposing the fact that they they failed to feed people with the truth of the Bible by declaring what was in their human understanding instead of

what God had written in the Bible. God says in 1 Cor 2:13 that we must utilize His methodology of “... *comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*” (Appendix D)

What About Mat 16:18?

One of the most prominent verses that is presented to seemingly contradict the teaching of the fall of the institutional churches and denominations is found in Mat 16:18, which states, “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this **rock** [petra:G4073] I will build [oikodomeo:G3618] my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”

I Will Build

Christ has not been “building” a physical church comprised of saved and unsaved people, even though this did occur during the 1955 years of what can be classified as the “church age.” Rather Christ has been building His eternal church – also known as the Body of Christ or Bride of Christ – as He saved His elect people here and there throughout history. Mat 7:24 asserts, *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built [oikodomeo:G3618] his house upon a rock [petra:G4073]:*

The “rock” (petra:G4073) in view has everything to do with Christ, as noted in the preceding two verses, in which the terms “rock” and “I will build” appear together, in the context of one who is a child of God, and his spiritual foundation is the faith and work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone:

Luke 6:48 maintains, *He is like a man which built [oikodomeo:G3618] an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock [petra:G4073]: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock [petra:G4073].*

This is the reason why 1 Cor 3:11 emphatically states: *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

My Church

The Greek word rendered “church” (ekklesia:G1577) is a compound word comprised of two words, “ek” (G1537) and “kaleo” (G2564) signifying those who are the “called (kaleo) out (ek)” ones. Who are these that are “called out,” and what are they “called

out **of**” or “called out **from**”? Let’s begin by looking at some important references that contain the word “*kaleo*” (G2564) in order to properly understand its spiritual implications:

Rom 9:11 insists, *(For [the children] being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of **him that calleth** [kaleo:G2564];)*

2 Tim 1:9 adds, “*who hath saved us, and **called** [kaleo:G2564] us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*” **(Appendix E)**

These individuals in view were actually saved (by grace) which was bestowed upon them, “... *before the world began,*” which comports with the idea that Christ atoned for the sins of all His elect from the foundation of the world, according to Rev 13:8, *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

This is also substantiated in Heb 9:16-17 and 28, in light of the fact that all God’s elect were figuratively written in the “will” or “last testament” – which is called “*the Lamb’s book of life*” (Rev 21:27) – and would only be eligible to receive their inheritance, after the Testator (Christ) died:

*For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. {17} For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth... {28} so Christ **was once** [hapax:G530] offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. **(Appendix F)***

Note that this is still a valid legal requirement today.

And The Gates Of Hell

The Greek words translated as “*the gates*” (*pile*:G4439) and “*of hell*” (*hades*:G86) only appear together in Mat 16:18. However, Mat 7:13-14 provide further insight into the distinction that God makes with respect to “hell,” which is the “grave” and is synonymous with “destruction.” Since the “... *wages of sin is death...*” (Rom 6:23), it ultimately has to do with annihilation. Rom 6:23 also identifies with God’s law which was given to Adam in Gen 2:16-17:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: {17} But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt

*not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof **thou shalt surely** [muwth:H4191] **die** [muwth:H4191].*

In the original Hebrew text, the phrase “... *thou shalt **surely die***” reads this way: “... ***dying** thou shalt **die***.” The doubling of the word “dying” points to the fact that Adam and Eve **died spiritually** the very day they disobeyed God, and many hundreds of years later they also **died physically**.

Mat 7:13-14 affirm: *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide [is] the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to **destruction** [apoleia:G684], and many there be which go in thereat: {14} because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto **life** [zoe:G2222], and few there be that find it.*

This passage explains that there are two **gates** – one “*strait*” and one “*wide*.” There are also two **ways** – one “*narrow*” and one “*broad*.” The “*strait*” gate and “*narrow*” way leads to eternal life, and **few** (God’s elect) find it. On the other hand, the “*wide*” gate and “*broad*” way lead to destruction, and **many** (the non-elect) are found travelling on that road.

One understands clearly that “*the gates of hell*” in in Mat 16:18 refers to the kingdom of Satan, which can never hinder the salvation of any of God’s elect, nor impede the kingdom of God in any way. Yet, the kingdom of Satan most definitely did assault, as well as overcome, the local churches and denominations **because this was the will of God**, as this study has shown.

Shall Not Prevail Against It

The usage of the Greek word for “*shall prevail against*” (*katischyō*:G2729) is interesting as it is only found in one other verse. We read in Luke 23:23, “*And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests **prevailed** [katischyō:G2729].*”

In both Mat 16:18 and Luke 23:23 one cannot help but notice that God’s will always prevails, according to His divine wisdom. God categorically states in Mat 16:18 that the kingdom of Satan would **not** be victorious over the kingdom of God. However, in the matter of the Crucifixion (which was a demonstration of the Atonement which took place prior to Creation), in Luke 23:23 it was God’s stated purpose and desire that Christ be crucified, and furthermore that it would take place on the very day of the Passover. It was in perfect fulfillment of that Feast when the priests were offering up the unblemished lambs in the Temple.

Conclusion

The scope of this paper has been to show when and why God ceased using the institutional churches and denominations as the external representation of the kingdom of God on earth – even as He divorced Himself from national Israel previously. The Savior’s stirring remarks in Luke 19:41-42 are worth repeating:

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city [i.e., Jerusalem, which typified all the churches and denominations], and wept over it, {42} Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things [which belong] unto thy peace! **But now they are hid from thine eyes.***

In the historical context, national Israel is being targeted, but spiritually the churches and denominations are included, thus highlighting their spiritual blindness right up to our present day.

Appendix A

Acts 2:1-16 and 36-41 declare: *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. {2} And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. {3} And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. {4} And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. {5} And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. {6} Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. {7} And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? {8} And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? {9} Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, {10} Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, {11} Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. {12} And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? {13} Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. {14} But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: {15} For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is [but] the third hour of the day. {16} But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel... {36} Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. {37} Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do? {38} Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. {39} For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call. {40} And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. {41} Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.*

Appendix B

1290 is a very important spiritual number that ties together the three “*Great Tribulation*” (or “*Great Affliction*”) periods mentioned in the Bible. They are all characterized by two Greek words: “*mezas*” (G3173) and “*thlipsis*” (G2347):

The first one occurred in 1877 BC when Jacob went into Egypt (representing slavery to sin and to Satan) to escape a terrible famine in his day (Gen 41:56) according to Acts 7:11, *Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great [mezas:G3173] affliction [thlipsis:G2347]: and our fathers found no sustenance.*

The second one took place in 587 BC in which Jerusalem was completely destroyed (during the 70 year Babylonian captivity from 609 BC to 539 BC) under King Nebuchadrezzar. That was precisely 1290 years after 1877 BC.

2 Chr 36:14-21 describes this in detail (as God had warned previously in Lev 26): *Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. {15} And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: {16} but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. {17} Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. {18} And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. {19} And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. {20} And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: {21} to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten [i.e., 70] years.*

Lev 26:14-33 solemnly warned, *But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; {15} and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my*

covenant: {16} I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. {17} And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. {18} And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. {19} And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: {20} and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. {21} And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. {22} I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate. {23} And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; {24} then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. {25} And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. {26} And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied. {27} And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; {28} then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. {29} And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. {30} And I will destroy your high places (i.e., false doctrines) and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. {31} And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. {32} And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. {33} And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

The third period happened in 1994 during the 23-year “Great Tribulation” era of our day, which was precisely 2580 years (1290 x 2) after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC., as we read in Mat 24:21, *For then shall be great [megas:G3173] tribulation [thlipsis:G2347], such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

Appendix C

Mar 15:38 records, *And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

Luk 23:45 likewise reveals, *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*

Appendix D

Jer 23:9-17 and 25-40 declare: *Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness. {10} For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. {11} For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD. {12} Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery [ways] in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. {13} And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. {14} I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. {15} Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. {16} Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, [and] not out of the mouth of the LORD. {17} They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you...{21} I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. {22} But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings...*

{25} I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. {26} How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, [they are] prophets of the deceit of their own heart; {27} Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. {28} The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What [is] the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. {29} [Is] not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer [that] breaketh the rock in pieces? {30} Therefore, behold, I [am] against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. {31} Behold, I [am] against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. {32} Behold, I [am] against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. {33} And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. {34} And [as for] the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house. {35} Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? {36} And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. {37} Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? {38} But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD; {39} Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, [and cast you] out of my presence: {40} And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

Eze 34:1-10 and 17-22 further reveal, *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, {2} Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? {3} Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: [but] ye feed not the flock. {4} The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up [that which was] broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was*

lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. {5} And they were scattered, because [there is] no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. {6} My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek [after them]. {7} Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; {8} [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because [there was] no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; {9} Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; {10} Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them...

{17} And [as for] you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. {18} [Seemeth it] a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? {19} And [as for] my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. {20} Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, [even] I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. {21} Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; {22} Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

Appendix E

In John 10:3 God refers to His elect people as “sheep:” *To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth [kaleo:G2564] his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

Rom 8:30 adds, *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he [kaleo:G2564] also called [kaleo:G2564]: and whom he called [kaleo:G2564], them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

1 Cor 1:9 also underscores, *God [is] faithful, by whom ye were called [kaleo:G2564] unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

1 Pet 2:9 likewise teaches, *But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called [kaleo:G2564] you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Appendix F

Rom 6:10 also states: *For in that he died, he died unto sin once [ephapax:G2178 (epi:G1909 – “before;” and hapax:G530 – “once”)]; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

And Hebrews 10:10 and 12-14 provide additional corroboration: *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [ephapax:G2178] for all... {12} but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; {13} from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. {14} For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

Lastly, 1 Pet 3:18 maintains, *For Christ also hath once [hapax:G530] suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

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