***Roman / American Culture

Colossians 1:25-29

COL-228***

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Our topic is "The Mystery of the Church," segment number 43, in Colossians 1:25-29.

The Word of God is alive and powerful and active. One of our people today was telling me about being in a university, studying a college religious course. And after several days in an institution that one would expect to be biblically oriented, things became worse, as the professor explained the book of Galatians, and left hanging in the air the certainty of salvation – of all things, which is what that book was written all about. And this individual stood it just so long, and finally had to raise a hand and say, "That isn't what the Word of God says." And it took courage and knowledge to be able to do that. But, what does the Word of God say? "Be prepared to give a reason for the faith that is in you." And that word "faith" refers to your doctrinal beliefs.

How many Christians, and how many churches, would you think could even stand up to speak about error when they hear it, let alone to have the courage to do it. And yet, it happens all the time. And what happens is that this particular professor kept putting down those who are literalists, biblical inerrancy, premillennialist, and dispensationalist. And our member had the perception to say, "But you don't live by the Law of Moses, so you're a dispensationalist too.

The ignorance out there is enormous. But this man is a graduate of one of the big seminaries in our area, but he knows nothing about the deep things of the Spirit of God. That's what most people face, and it is contemptible on the part of believers, who are associated with a place like Berean Church, not to be wildly fanatical for their supportive presence, where the Word of God is proclaimed. It's only when we lose it, that we begin to wake up.

We have been looking at the mystery of the church – this marvelous body of believers that we only, in this age, are part of. And the results of a life lived under the principles of the church age are so magnificent that it makes you want to weep when you realize that someday, people check out of this life. And how many good things that they have been taught will now come back to their mind? And how much will be their regret that they were indifferent to it?

So, don't ever be careless with the Word of God. Don't ever be indifferent to it. Esteem it, because it is the mind of Christ. Once sin entered the human experience in Eden, Satan was able to influence man's mind against God's law, and against God's will. And that's what the devil does all the time. He influences people against that which is truth, and that which is the will of God. Human viewpoint pours out of the old sin nature under Satan's control, and it dominates the mind of man. They call that "wisdom." God's ways for living are forgotten, and it is distorted into Satan's lifestyle. Now, without the revelation of God's wisdom from the Bible, mankind cannot know how to live for personal fulfillment and happiness. It is only the Word of God that gives us orientation.

**Rome**

1. **The Breakdown of the Family**

Rome was a nation which began with the principles of integrity required by God, even though they didn't have the Bible. Rome worshiped false gods, but because they had a heritage of knowledge from past experience, they lived according to what we would call biblical principles. And the result was that they were compatible to the rules and the laws of God. But Rome abandoned its early morality and its biblical role for government. And that was one of the amazing things that followed immediately that is so pertinent to our times. Once they destroyed the family, the next thing they were out to destroy, and it followed as night must follow day, what the government was to do, until finally, the powerful majestic Romans became a bunch of ninnies under the authority of an overruling, overwhelming government.

So Rome, once it abandoned its biblical role for government, degenerated into the ways of Satan, and national destruction followed inevitably. God's truth is operational for blessing, even if the True Creator God is not known. And that's what's so amazing. God's truth is truth, even if the devil himself were standing in this pulpit, proclaiming the truth of God. And we have many people in the past, who used to be with us, who believe that is the case. It is still the truth. If it's God's Word, it's God's principle, and it is the truth. So, that's why the Romans were so mightily blessed. They were on target without knowing really why.

However, the first factor, when they started on the way down, in their national demise, was the breakdown of the family unit. Roman life originally was built on a foundation of the constituted authority of the father, to the mother, and to the children. And people respected the authority of the father in the family. But as the role of male and female in the society deteriorated and became unisex, the result was divorce, and sexual relationships detached from love, and detached from the confines of marriage. And there was no longer any personal restraint on these things. So, the husband and the father was no longer the final court of decision in the family. And what there was instead was a tug-of-war between the husband and the wife – a tug-of-war of wills, and between the children and the parents.

It is amazing how parents cannot understand that they are the priests of their children. In the Old Testament, until those children reached the age of 20, your father was your authority. And in the case of the girls in the family, their father is their authority until they are married. Then they're handed over to their husband, and he takes over the male authority over them. And if she is not married, then they have the male authority of their church leaders, who are there with access to direction, so that Satan cannot make fools of them.

Now this is God's way. And it cannot be ignored. And when it is, disaster inevitably follows. And we keep trying to stress to our young people that God has His ways. And His ways are right. They're not the ways of the world. The world scoffs at them; laughs at them; and, makes fun of those ways. But you must never be intimidated.

Now, if you cannot answer for why you think something is truth, like the fact that you will go to heaven, no matter what you may end up doing to yourself personally, you are going to heaven, once you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, at the point of your faith, and placed into Christ, and that cannot be removed. If you don't know how to defend that, then you'll be made to look like a ninny in front of the world system, and especially in front of the religious crowd.

It is the role of the father to see to it that he cares for his children, and guides them on the way, and insists that, while they're under his authority, and his roof, and his table, he cares for them according to the principles of the Word of God. And they may come to you and say, "Well, the other families let us do this. Mrs. So-and-So lets her kids do this, Mr. So-and-So lets his kids do this." If they say that, you tell them that you are not that parent. You are what you are by the knowledge of God, and you're going to care for them according to the laws of God, and according to the responsibility you have.

So, Rome, unfortunately, did not have that respect for the Word of God. So, when they started to slide down, they had no frame of reference. What did they believe? They came to believe that man was the God. They came to believe that man was the structure of everything. That was the supreme thing in their lives. But the role of male and female deteriorated. And the result was love detached from marriage. The husband and the father no longer became the final court of authority. Women did not want to be their husbands' helpers anymore. They had their own careers outside the family unit. And women did not want to bear children, so as to avoid spoiling their figures. And they wanted to be free to do their own thing. And so they resorted to abortion.

Somebody was telling me something (and I forget who said it to me this morning), but they asked me if I had seen a program led by very prominent lady commentator, and a group of women who were discussion panel. And they were talking. And this one lady was talking about this wonderful woman who was preserving the redwood forest. They were cutting the redwood forest. The company owned it. They had the right to cut it. And this lady was an environmentalist. So, she climbed up into a tree, so that they couldn't cut the redwood forest. She might get injured, or a tree might fall on earth (if they were lucky), and remove the problem. But here she is, carrying on, and these ladies are oohing and awing. I was told how wonderful this woman is, that she would be up there in that tree. And then the moderator said, "What would any of you sit up in a tree for? What would be so important to you that you would not give up?" And one lady said, "I'd climb into a redwood tree to protect a woman's right for abortion."

I told you this morning that the feminist movement has one purpose, and that is to murder unborn children. And the Planned Parenthood covers this up in various ways, but at the heart of the organization is that brutal fact. That woman would expose herself to danger, and make such a statement, as to be up in a redwood tree, just so she could murder the unborn children. Do you see how history is repeating itself indeed?

So, these women did not want to be their husband's helpers. They did not want to be burdened down with children. Therefore, all of a sudden, that which was unthinkable in the Roman Empire (you could get in really big trouble for abortion in its earlier days), now it became commonplace. And children, in the process, did not have the supervision that they needed. So, people were raising rebellious barbarians, resulting from neglect and permissiveness of worn-out mothers, who were out in the world, doing other things than they should have been doing. So, with the breakdown of the family, there was no basis for the rearing of the young in any kind of moral integrity, so to preserve the personal freedom of the individual citizens.

1. **Excessive Taxation**

Now, the next factor that comes into this picture after the family breakdown (what brought Rome down) was unthinkable: excessive taxation. That was a number two thing. And this gradually crept up on the citizens of Rome. What they did was that they gradually increased the taxation. For what reason? A welfare program. The government of Rome did the unthinkable. Rome was known for its justice. That's why our system of government has been based upon it. And Rome would not tolerate your taking other people's money for your personal use.

Now, the government becomes a policeman who's taking the fruits of your labors to give to others that they believe are deserving of it. And what happened? Multitudes decided they were better off on welfare than they were working. So, the welfare rolls grew and grew. In Rome, more and more people were looking to the government to take care of them. At this point, Rome was now violating the principle of 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12. Paul writes this because certain people in the Thessalonian churches (that he had taught for about six weeks) – principles of prophecy of the rapture, and these wonderful things that are coming, they decided that the rapture was so close at hand (that it was near). So, they quit working, and they would go around to the houses of the other Christians who were working, and mooch off of them.

So Paul said, "Let's get this straight. You don't know when the rapture is going to come. There are certain signals, but you'll not know when it happens. We know when the second coming has come – that has more signals. But the thing that you need to understand is that you keep going about with Christian integrity, caring for yourself. You don't become a dependent on somebody else, when you are capable of doing it yourself.

So, in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, Paul says, "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order (here, 'order' means 'commandment'): If anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now, such persons we command and exhort, in the Lord Jesus Christ, to work in quiet fashion, and eat their own bread."

Now, we pointed out this principle to our teenagers on the campout. One of the things I did the first night was to show them a splendid video film by Rudyard Kipling, the English novelist, who wrote a novel called Captains Courageous. It is one of those rarities of entertainment that was clean-cut, and instructional all the way. And what it is a story of a spoiled boy. He is, I think maybe, 13 or 14 years old, if that. And he's born into great wealth, and his parents have gone about their own life, and now they're gone. So he's under some caretaker, but he is enormously wealthy. And he's on this ocean liner, and he is creating all kinds of pranks. And when they say, "This is costing us money, running this ship, with what you're doing – taking our crew's attention, he says, 'Just speak to my lawyer here. He'll write you a check – whatever you need.

Well, finally, he decides to get into a crap game (that's shooting dice, for you more secluded Christians), and he's winning. And he decides to be big-time, because all the other shooters are men who work on the ship. They were smoking cigars. So, he decides to have a cigar smoke. And he bites off the end of the cigar like you're supposed to, and you spit it out. And he lights it. And he's puffing away and playing. And pretty soon he's beginning to get groggy, and starts holding his stomach. Finally he can't stand it anymore. And he runs up to the ship, to feed the fish with his last meal. And as he leans over the rail, he reaches up to grab a support on a sail cloth, and it rips. He goes overboard. The ship goes on. There he is, out in the middle of the ocean.

You may want to get that, and see what happens next. It's very fabulous. No, I'll tell you what happens. As he struggles to stay afloat, and it looks like he's done for, along comes a fishing boat out of Massachusetts – a cod fishermen. They happen to be out in their boats fishing, bringing in these big long cod fish, and they pick him up. The outcome of it is that he comes on board ship, and he tells the captain, "I want you to take the nearest port. How much do you want? I'll pay you whatever it takes. I don't want anything else. Let's just get on our way. Let's get this organized. And he's commanding this captain, who lets him know that on this ship, there's only one will, and that's the captain's.

So, he said, "We have reached a fishing ground. And we're going to fish." The boy says, "Well, I'm not going to. What do you think I'm going to do? It's going to be three months before you get back to port." The captain says, "That's right." The boy says, "Do you think that I'm going to stay around here for three months? What do you think I'm going to do?" And the captain says, "You're going to work?" And the boy says, "I'm not going to work. Do you know who you're talking to? I'm Alfonso So-and-So, whatever (the third or fourth or fifth)." But he was somebody. And he was not going to work.

So, the captain, being a man of the book, said, "Fine. If you don't work on this ship, you don't eat on this ship." So, he coward on deck for a couple or three days, not eating, until he couldn't stand it. And you know what? He decided it was better eating than being arrogant. And the result was that the story unfolds, it had very dramatic developments in his life. So, all of a sudden, this (which had become a brat), by the time they came back to port after some really wild adventures, and a few tears that appeared in the eyes of the girls, he becomes something dramatically different. Why? Because he learned the self-respect of not taking the fruits of other men's labors.

What do we do to people in our country with the welfare program, who could handle things themselves? It turns them into wards of the state, and degenerates them personally. It robs them of the dignity of their humanity.

Well, this is what Rome did. As Rome drifted away, they started increasing taxation. Do you realize now, here in the United States, that under President Reagan, even with an opposition party in control, he was able to ram through those tremendous reductions of taxation? And everybody was screaming and hollering how this was going to lose money for the government. And what happened? The next year, all of a sudden, everybody's taxes dropped dramatically. And I mean dramatically. The next year, the government had four times the revenue that it had the year before. Why? Because people had their own money to spend on their own enterprise, and they became entrepreneurs, and they prospered because of their efforts. Their hearts were in it – as under socialism, it never can be. And the result was that people made more money. So, they were glad to pay their taxes. And the result was that people prospered, and the government prospered.

However, that has all been reversed again. And even more so. How many months do you have to work to pay all your taxes at all levels of government? At least four-and-a-half months, if not five months. It's someplace now, I think, until the end of May, you work for the government, before you are now able to keep that money. Up to then, its taxes. It's exactly the road that Rome went down. The result was that when people were idle, what were they going to do? Well, they want to be entertained. Rome made that mistake. They then began providing public entertainment, and that drained the treasury even more.

So, how will they take care of getting more money? They didn't have printing presses. That's the way we would do it now. So, they inflated by taking the coins, and mixing a little base metal into it: a little lead into their silver coins; and, a little lead into their gold coins. So, they got the weight, but no longer the value. And when people caught onto that, they said, "Fine. It used to take two silver drachmas to buy this. Now it's going to take three, because I know these are no longer worth two silver coins. And the result was that everything started costing more.

What happened next? The government started borrowing, and Rome was now in enormous financial debt. And the next thing they were doing all along, with the welfare program, and the increasing of government provisions, they were sliding into socialism.

We have in the United States government today a new word (and it may have slipped by you) to describe the economic position of certain politicians. "The L word" is the kiss of death. If you're called a liberal, you can almost never get elected. So, they have a new name. It's now "the M word." They're called moderates. What is a moderate? A liberal by another name. That's all. And, as Shakespeare said, "A rose by any other name smells as sweet." And he could have added: "A skunk stinks as badly, even if you call him something else."

And the result was that we have this socialism in the United States that is appalling. I mean it is so rampant, and they're in both parties. One party is the socialist party, but the other has a big contingent, and they call themselves "moderates." This is what's done in the religious circles. If you hear that somebody (some religious leader) is a moderate, you know that he's a liberal. He doesn't believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. He doesn't believe in the separation of Israel and the church. He doesn't believe in the Christian basis of giving by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't believe in the power system of the Holy Spirit based upon doctrine. Everything that is our lifeline and our lifeblood, the moderate rejects. A liberal always bases his views on the capacity of man – on the ability of man to do right, and to have the wisdom to conduct himself. And that's not true.

So, socialism became rampant in the empire of Rome, just as it's eating away at the foundations of the United States today. But it is being hidden.

Furthermore, Rome, because it had expanded its territory in such a large way, that the Roman legions were everywhere in the known world around the Mediterranean – they created a gigantic military budget. And in the Roman world, they were proud of the Latin phrase, "Pox Romana;" that is, "the peace of Rome." Wherever Rome went, peace was going to be established. And peace was going to be maintained. Well, it took enormous military capacity to do that. And after a while, there was such an extended outreach to protect, and now that the nation is losing revenues, and also the moral fiber of the people is becoming so undermined because of the breakdown of the family, it became harder and harder to keep a military force, where men were willing to do what's necessary to do; that is, to put your life on the line, and to do the job of protecting the nation's freedom, realizing that it might be at the expense of your own life to do it. Who's going to do that? Except people of quality and character?

So, I'm amused to hear some politicians speaking today about "the Pox Americana" – "the American peace." And that's what we're doing. We're sending American military people to try to keep peace with people who have been at each other's throat for generations, and are going to stay at each other's throat for generations, because the things that are dividing them are basic and fundamental. These things can never be removed.

So, should we not try to help nations – people who are being wiped out in the genocide? Yes. What we should do is send them weapons. Send them the armaments. Send them the ability to defend themselves against their enemies. But only somebody who has lost the orientation of the divine institution of government, would ever send American military personnel into harm's way in situations like that.

What is the United States doing today? We can't wait to send soldiers into desperate situations, trying to keep peace with people who will not remain peaceful with one another. Yet, those who are under attack, and those whose lives and whose nationality is being threatened, we could send them the armaments. We'll give you the capacity to defend yourself. And you do it. Don't ask Americans, who have no particular interest or particular need for you to have peace, to give their lives for it. It would be very hard, I would think, for anybody to justify one American life in behalf of people who don't really, particularly appreciate Americans to begin with.

However, this is what Rome is doing, and we can't learn from that? The Roman working class also found itself unable to compete with cheap foreign labor. Stuff began pouring in from other parts of the empire. The maritime industry developed. Ships were going back and forth carrying goods, and bringing in the things that people wanted. And the result was that the Romans couldn't compete anymore, because they wanted to be paid for more than they produced. They were on the track of the government setting the minimum wage, in order that you would have what you weren't worth. So, what did the government do? It subsidized the workers to maintain their easy standard of living. It's another way of saying that they set a minimum wage. Yet, people could not stay in business and pay that minimum wage. So, these people had even fewer jobs. The same thing is happening today.

So, what did they do? Rome became one slave depot. They brought slaves in from every place on the face of the earth. There were times when there were almost as many slaves in Rome as there were citizens, because this is how they were taking up the slack of the wages – bringing people in that they had conquered, who would have to work for them.

So first of all, they broke up the family. Secondly, they hit people with excessive taxation for their welfare programs, and to justify people not working.

1. **A Mounting Obsession with Pleasure**

The third one that brought Rome down was a mounting obsession with pleasure. They didn't have anything to do. They sought pleasure. They sought it in the form of entertainment. And they sought it in sports. But these were not the kind of sports we talk about. They sought it in the brutalization of sports – putting men in an arena, and letting them fight till one of them killed the other. And that's what you went to see. And it was done day-in and day-out – the brutalization of sports.

In Central America, in areas like Mexico and Guatemala, they had these Mayan civilizations (the Aztecs). And one of the practices that they had was athletics to entertain people. And the games were played with a captain and a team. And the team that lost, the captain had his head cut off. It was very hard to find captains in those days to lead the teams. Sports was not one of the more popular practices. And I've stood there, and looked at their carvings. And here is this poor guy. You see his head, and you see the sword. And then they have blood spurting out. I counted them. There were seven different streams. I don't know if that's significant – holding his head over, it was a perfect cut. And this was his reward for losing the game.

Now, this mounting obsession, with sports that is brutalized – that's an old satanic trick. Rome's prosperity led to a national craze for pleasure, and pleasure was on a level of brutality, and of enormous sensuality in entertainment. A great deal of this sensuality they put down in pictures in the public baths. And it wouldn't be done today, but I remember one of my professors at Dallas Seminary speaking about a tour which he had made of the Roman world. And they would visit these baths. And the tour guides would come to these places, and they would say, "Gentlemen, only." They wouldn't let the ladies go in. And he said: "And after I went in a couple of times, I realized that they shouldn't have been asking the gentlemen to go in either."

Here was the most pornographic things imaginable drawn on the walls of these baths, and sometimes they were even put in with mosaic tile. And it was the expression of entertainment and sensuality in a most degrading way. Sports became brutalized, and entertainment became sensual, and public portrayal of that sensuality. Men enjoyed such dissipation that they, in time, lost their moral fiber, capable of dealing with the barbarians who were threatening the freedom of the Roman Empire. And these men simply did not have the capacity of manhood to stand up to the people that were knocking on their door to conquer them.

The Circus Maximus is a big oval ring that was used for race-horsing. That's what it was called: "The Big Circle" – "The Circus Maximus." And there were other entertainments that were put there. Some of them were these chariot races, which were also brutal. You tried to come up and hang a wheel, so that you ripped the wheel off your opponent, and he went flying in all direction, and the horses came crashing over him. The Circus Maximus seated 400,000 people in Rome. It was big. And the idle multitudes, who were living on welfare from the increase of taxation, would rush to the stadium at dawn, because you didn't have to pay to get in, to get good seats. Or they even would line up the night before and camp out, so that they could be first in line to get the best seats.

Then all day long, the entertainments would continue, and sometimes for several days in a row. And the result was that the government was exhausted in trying to have the ingenuity to find new ways of satisfying their desire for brutality, and their desire for sensuality, and creating bigger and bigger features.

Well, along with that came the gambling, and the lottery concept. Gambling was prevalent to heighten the gratification of the pleasures at the games and at the races. What the emperors were doing was keeping the minds of the citizens on trivial things – the trivial things of sports, and the trivial things of coming events. And all of these things were presented by the emperors as empathizing with the people in their need – a need that government itself had brought upon them.

So, the emperors wanted to show that they had a feeling for the people. That's where the phrase originated: "I can feel your pain." And the idea was that: "You will like me, because I just feel for you, and I'm going to do so much for you. I'm going to see that the government provides for you." And to this very day, there are people who have lost their manhood, or lost their womanhood, and they'll reach out and say, "I'm for you." As spectacular as the arenas were gory and grossly indecent, it was public pornography on display.

1. **Expanding Military**

The fourth thing that ([Edward Gibbon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Gibbon)) said that finally resulted in the demise of the Roman government, was expanding armaments (or military) – military ventures, and the military institution. They expanded the production of armaments to fight the external attacks that were coming against them. But as society decayed morally, the will to fight for freedom diminished. When you do not have a moral quality, you don't want to die. Why should you die for somebody who is a dog just like you are? And as the will to resist was weakened, the barbarians were emboldened. So, all these dramatic barbarian groups, that were out at the outer fringes of the empire, began to push, to find a weak spot. And the harder the barbarians pushed, the greater the threat to the empire, and the greater the money spent on defense, and the greater became the problem, because there weren't men of quality and character to do the defending.

So, the moral weaknesses actually invited attack, which money, in time, could not stop. And they did degenerate into mercenaries. Finally, Rome was hiring others to come and fight for them. They had sunk that low. But there was no hope. Mercenaries, as the Americans found in the Revolutionary War, can be overcome. They'll only go so far.

1. **The Decay of Religion**

Then the fifth one, as you might expect, was the decay of religion. There's always, in the back of the mind of man, somebody out there for me to account to, even as there is today. With all of the efforts to bring about a world government, they also realize now that they must bring about some kind of a religious unity among people as well. People have to have an awareness to fill that satisfaction – that vacuum in the soul, that there's something bigger than themselves.

So, Rome was pantheistic. It had many gods. And you can go into the city of Rome to this day, and see that magnificent building, the Pantheon, with its great arched ceiling, where the gods were placed on display, who were the ones that Rome worship. And these espoused certain moral principles which bound the nation together. And they did promote patriotism. Their gods were a unifying effort.

However, the problem was that their gods were just like people, therefore they had an evil quality about them. And Rome lost its faith in the gods. As things became worse for them, the gods no longer held their loyalty. So, in order to try and find something real, what has happened today?

Well, in the 1960s, it was people going into drugs, the old counterculture, which has become the main culture. It was trying to deal with the occult. So, astrology and sorcery became the guides that people turned to, and the mysticism that was coming in from the East, because of their conquest. These were the people that they were turning to, to find some reality. This is the same thing that we showed you with Hinduism in our recent services.

So, Rome lost the unifying effect of its government – that it had a religious base. This is the same problem that the United Nations is trying to solve today. Once they lost that unifying base, they had no virtues to respect. And Roman society became more and more unstable. Morals declined more and more. Past virtues were abandoned. And the result was barnyard morality. They had no integrating feature. There was nothing big enough for society to rest upon when all they built it upon was man.

Well, what were their gods? Their gods were evil in one respect or another. So, they did not have an eternal supernatural base upon which to build society, once they began to abandon the principles of biblical conduct. And Roman culture was based on man. It had no infinite reference point. And it based its value on society. The only place where they had a reference point was the old sin nature. So Satan poured in the lies.

The Roman gods, being finite, in the image of sinful man – they were no inspiration. And as people got into trouble, they had less and less power over the people. Religion in Roman society degenerated, then, into emperor worship as the god. They finally said, "The emperor is god, and he represents the spirit of Rome." Therefore, you had to pledge allegiance and faithfulness (loyalty) to the deity of the emperor – not just to the emperor, but to his deity. And you had to make a statement, and sign a declaration, that you were loyal to the deity of the emperor. They were trying to give the empire a unifying point.

This is the New Age movement today, which is moving toward the worship, ultimately, of the antichrist in the tribulation. He is going to be the unifying faith. And, of course, the Roman Empire will be back in full operation then.

So the Christians, when they came along, they wouldn't do this. This is why the Christians were persecuted. It wasn't because they were an offshoot of Judaism. You could be anything you wanted, religiously, in the Roman Empire. When they conquered a group of people, they let them have their own religion. They didn't bother what they did. But the Christians came and said, "No, we will not sign the statement, and pledge loyalty to the emperor as god, because we have a book. It is the Word from the Creator God. And we know that the emperor is not God. We have an authority that is bigger than man." Now, suddenly, the Christians were a powerful force. And they were getting people's attention. Here was something upon which a person could base his life.

Well, the result was that the religion of Rome simply collapsed under Christianity, with its base of an infinite Creator God, and His revealed wisdom in Scripture. And they had the audacity, therefore, to say, "We can judge the leadership of Rome. We can judge the emperor. And we can tell him that he is doing something that is wrong. The government is doing something that is wrong. Society is doing something that is wrong." And the Roman authorities said, "How dare you treat us with that disrespect." And the result was that the Christians had to make the decision. That was when the title of the old song came to mean something: “Who is on the Lord's Side?" And they had to make the decision: who is on the Lord's side?"

Well, when they faced the persecutions in the Roman arena, who better to put out there to satisfy the lust for brutality in sports, than Christians, fed to the lions. Christians tied to poles, soaked with oil, and then lighted at night for illumination for the night games in the arena. And they had to say, "I am on the Lord's side. I'm not going to be on Satan's side. I know which side is truth, and I know which side is a lie. And Satan is the great and big liar."

So, the Roman Empire, finally, in the fifth century A.D., became no more. But that is not quite true. It came to an end as a unified empire. It broke up into individual nations. And then the Bible tells us that this empire, the last of the world empires, at the end times, will begin to group nations together in geographic locations. Here would be a union here; here would be a union; and, here a union, and they would be brought together. And finally, a strong man will come on the scene, the man of sin, the antichrist. And he will take these entities that have united in local areas, and he will join them together under his authority. And the Roman Empire will be alive and well once more. And it will be in full force, and it will still be based upon the fact of the belief that man is God. And the emperor then will be the antichrist.

Well, what is he going to ask of them? You know. He's going to set his image up in the Jewish temple, after the first three-and-a-half years of the tribulation. And he says, "I am the God. I bear the spirit of the empire. And you'll worship me." And those who worship him will have a mark put on them. It's the mark of the beast. Now those people will be forever doomed to the lake of fire.

The believers too will have a mark that God will put upon them. And when they say, "No. You may kill me, but I will not worship the antichrist." They'll have a mark, and many of them indeed will be martyred. Why? Because they'll make the statement. They'll make the decision: "I'm on the Lord's side."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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