

How Satan Succeeded in Changing God's Worship Day

Introduction

The letters to the Seven Churches of Revelation give stunning advice for individuals and churches as to how to be ready for Jesus' coming. The instructive messages of Revelation 10–11 qualify its students to be God's last evangelists. The three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are warnings that must intercept wicked humanity in a last call to repent.

- The Bible says that this last appeal will not be comprehended by most; the light which will lighten the earth with the gospel will be **called a false light**, by those who refuse to walk in its advancing glory.¹
- The kings and inhabitants of the world will instead drink from a golden cup filled with abominations which God calls filthiness of the wine of fornication (Revelation 17:2, 4).

Lucifer, the leader of the rebellion in heaven, became Satan. He was cast to earth.

- *"Therefore I will **cast thee as profane** out of the mountain of God: and **I will destroy thee**, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire"* (Ezekiel 28:16b; cf. 11-19).

*"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"* (Revelation 12:9).

- Ever since, he has been limited to this world, where all his demonic power is focused.



In the end-time prophecy Olivet discourse, Jesus *"answered and said unto them, **Take heed that no man deceive you**"* (Matthew 24:4). That warning means that it is possible to be misled.

Paul, in adjusting the Thessalonian thinking about the end of time, said: *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. **Let no man deceive you by any means**"* (II Thessalonians 2:1-3a).

¹ *The Review and Herald*, May 27, 1890 (emphasis added).

Satan is the master deceiver, and his confederates in evil have brought falsehood into religious understanding.

Is it any wonder that Paul said:

*“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the **rulers of the darkness of this world**, against **spiritual wickedness in high places**. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day”* (Ephesians 6:12).

Christ is coming soon. Satan knows that time is short and that he has but a little while longer in which to work.

- He is laboring with frenzied intensity.
- *“Woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you! He is filled with terrible anger, for he knows that he only has a little time!”* (Revelation 12:12 – NET).

Our challenge: How to detect the counterfeit, the religious deception.

God’s Distinguishing Mark or Sign

God gave the Sabbath to man as a monument to His partnership with Him and a reminder of His power and authority as Creator (Exodus 20:8-11).

- **After** sin came in, the purpose of that sacred day expanded.
- It became God’s special sign or mark of **His covenant restoration promises** (Exodus 31:16-17, Deuteronomy 5:15) and to remember that:
 - He is **the** God who would sanctify them (Exodus 31:13).
 - He is man’s Deliverer and Redeemer (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

The Sabbath, post-sin, was, therefore, **strengthened** as a day to honor **God’s authority**:

- As a distinguishing “sign” for His people as a unique “peculiar people”
- *“And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his **peculiar people**, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep **all his commandments**”* (Deuteronomy 26:18).
- *“But ye are a **chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people**; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”* (1 Peter 2:9).
- These echo John 14:15: *“If you love me keep my commandments.”*

The basis of God's covenant with man (for Israelite and Gentile) is loyalty to the Sabbath (Isaiah 56:3-7). That is why God's people are *different* – "peculiar."

- *"Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that **keepeth the sabbath** from polluting it, and **taketh hold of my covenant**"* (Isaiah 56:6).
- What covenant?
 - *"And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone"* (Deuteronomy 4:13; cf. Exodus 24:28).
 - It is God's promise to identify and restore a **special people** to be like Him, called **the 144,000**. They are restored to His moral standards.
- The Sabbath is part of God's covenant, which defines His authority.

What supreme issue might Satan defy as HIS unique "mark" of authority?

Nothing is more distinctive for Satan to attack than the fourth Commandment – the Sabbath! It has been God's set-aside mark!



- If he could wipe out its importance (!)
- Then his authority would be accepted over God's. He would have a stunning counterfeit!
 - The principle of **minimizing God's directives** is what he worked at in heaven.
 - That approach also worked in the Garden of Eden and led to Eve's fall.

A false Sabbath would attack God's authority, His covenant promises and His law.

- If he could set up a false Sabbath, **he would be** the one really being honored, **even though Christendom claimed loyalty to Jesus.**
- Then he would truly *"exalt his throne above the stars of God"* and *"be like* [not actually] *the Most High"* (Isaiah 14:13-14).

If he then can get "leaders" to **force the world** to honor him in this way – he will declare his mission accomplished.

- God's distinguishing sign or mark is the Sabbath.
- Satan's distinguishing sign is the false sabbath. Stay tuned – it is now his **mark!**

Satan's plan is formulated. This is how Satan has nearly succeeded!

The first allusion to false corporate worship in history and the Bible – amazing as it may seem – was to celestial objects, especially the sun.

- They were untouchable.
- They were mysterious.
- They moved and announced themselves every day.
- The sun was bright.
- It gave warmth, crops, and cheerfulness.
- It never argued or fought.
- It went across the sky silently.
- It was an ideal god – it was one of peace.
- It was good to everyone.

Archeological digs show that sun worship is found to be the earliest form of idolatry.

- Ancients worshiped the sun even without a statue or idol (Job 31:26-27).
- Ra – sun god of Egyptians
- Apollo – sun god of Grecians
- Baal – sun god of Phoenicians
- Moloch – sun god of Ammonites
- Shamash – sun god of Babylonians
- Mithra – sun god of the Persians, Indians and, later, the Romans



Something very tragic occurred to God's intense work to have a holy people – a peculiar people – who would be corporately His own:

- The people of the Sabbath – the chosen Hebrews –
- Adopted those pagan practices (Leviticus 26:30, Isaiah 17:8, Jeremiah 19:5). Thus, began the 490 years of Hebrew apostasy (which later led to 490 years of probation – Daniel 9:24).

King Manasseh (Jerusalem/Judah) worshiped the sun (II Kings 21:3, 5) – 685 B.C.

- Burning incense on altars to the sun was even done on the rooftops of private houses (Zephaniah 1:5).
- Josiah (good king) removed the symbols of sun worship (II Kings 23:5, 11-12).

- Ezekiel describes an end-time abomination of worshiping the sun (Ezekiel 8:15-16).

Daniel was given a unique prophecy regarding the end-time antichrist.

- He would “*think to change times and laws*” (Daniel 7:25).
- Expositors almost universally agree that that meant God’s *holy days* would be changed or dishonored – specifically Sabbath (through the Aramaic expressions).
- We will shortly show that it relates to worship on sun-day.

The Roman Empire (~100 B.C.–476 A.D.) and Sun Worship

Rome soon became the world empire (firmly by 27 B.C. with Julius Caesar). Satan then made inroads into that Empire.

“Among the Romans the Sun was early worshiped as Sol, later as Apollo, and lastly as Mithra, the Invincible Sun.

“Roman Sun worship received special impetus when it came into contact with Mithraism. Mithra (or Mithras) figured in ancient Iranian religious beliefs as an angel of light or a genius which attended the Sun.”²



“In time this fine distinction between Mithra and the Sun disappeared to the extent that for the people in general they were one and the same god.”³

- Roman soldiers had distinct sunrise worship rites that they were required to engage in on the first day of each week.
- It is unique that Jesus arose on Resurrection Morning **before** the earthly sun rose to announce that the true Sun of Righteousness is the God of all gods.
- At the tomb those Roman guard soldiers saw a sun/son rise from the sepulcher like they never had or would ever witness again!

² The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 7, pp. 419-420, art. “Mithra, Mithraism.”

³ <http://www.4angelspublications.com/Books/SiRP/CHAPTER%2010.pdf>

As Christianity grew and sought to infiltrate the world:

- One unique gift was retained from Jewish worship – the Sabbath. Up to 1500 A.D. a group of surviving Sabbathkeeping Christians remained – the Waldensians of Piedmont Valley, Italy.
- Thus – God’s Sabbath **and** Satan’s sun day were in competition! The Celtic Church even kept the Sabbath. St. Patrick was part of that church.

Satan’s tactics take on a new dimension. This is where a change came!

The Jews rebelled against God, against His Sabbaths through their traditions and finally against the Messiah.

- In Matthew 21:43, Jesus declared the kingdom of God would be taken from them.
- In Matthew 23:38, He stated after His most severe censure of Jewish leaders, “*your house is left unto you desolate.*”

Satan triumphed – another God-experiment “failed!” At least it appeared that way. Satan was now going to push his growing success to the maximum.

The Jews had rebelled against God – ***then they began a rebellion against Rome!***

- The first was between 66 and 70 A.D., leading to destruction of the temple and much of Jerusalem. Over a million Jews died, tens of thousands were taken prisoner.
- The second was between 132 and 135 A.D. in the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Tens of thousands were taken as slaves.

As the Babylonian Empire was used by God to punish the Jews, God used the Roman Empire to finalize His “*desolation*” curse (Matthew 24:15).

What did the Roman Empire specifically turn their attention finally against? Here it is!

- 70 A.D. – it was against the *people* and their *assets*.
- 135 A.D. – it was against the *people* and their peculiar *worship day*. The *pivotal* Jewish practice was the Sabbath. Remember “*the peculiar people.*” Mithraism became engrained within the Empire!

It was to have been a sign of holiness, uniqueness, introducing the true God by their practices. It was to have been God’s mark – distinguishing His people.

- ~135 A.D. the “Epistle of Barnabas” repudiated Judaism as the true religion.⁴
 - Anti-Semitism was now in writing.
 - Sun-day (first day of the week) was called the “Lord’s Day” for the first time in writing. Why?
 - Mithra, the Roman sun god, was called “Lord.” The first day of the week became sun-day/Mithra’s day, thus, the “Lord’s Day.”

Apostasy now began to penetrate the early Christian church.

Satan’s Success Begins to Mount

- Early in the first century the sun-god Mithra, of Indian and Persian origin, had penetrated Europe (except Britain, which included Scotland and Ireland).
- By the second and third centuries it was the largest pagan cult in the Roman Empire.

By 250 A.D.:

- Roman Emperor Valerian established a college to train “sun priests” in Rome.
- His coins bore a image of the sun with the legend: “The sun-god of Imperial Rome”
- December 25 was set aside as a festival to honor Mithra’s birthday.

Emperor Aurelian (270–275 A. D.), whose mother was a priestess of the Sun, was especially devoted to Sun worship.”

From this time until the reign of Constantine I (306-337 A. D.) the cult of the ***Invincible Sun*** was the supreme and official religion of the Roman Empire.

Mithraism taught:

- Sun worship (*Sol Invictus* – the invincible sun)
- Immortality of the soul
- Hell for all sinners – which led to the concept of purgatory
- Out of this the “Christian Church” of Rome developed a representation of the sun, then added a Cross (as shown in this illustration).
- “IHS” stood for three Egyptian gods: Isis, Horus and Seb. The bishops of Rome changed the meaning to Jesus Hominum Salvator (Jesus the Savior of men).



⁴ The Epistle of Barnabas, 100 A.D., Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, p. 147.

Temples to Mithra began to spring up everywhere.

- Emperor Aurelian built a large **sun temple** in Rome.
- Its priests were called **pontiffs**.
- **Women** helpers were retained who would later be called **nuns** in the Roman apostate church.⁵

The sunbursts began to be depicted in art as coming out of Roman emperors' heads.

- Later, it became the halo around saints, babies and religious leaders.
- Allegedly, they would later represent Christ as the Sun of Righteousness. BUT – really, **they honored the sun cults**.

The Apostate Christian Church Begins to Emerge

In 313 A.D. Constantine brought all Christian persecution to a halt – Edict of Milan.

In 316 A.D. the bishop of Rome, **Sylvester I**, gave an ecclesiastical command (Catholics claim he was one of their popes):



Sylvester I

- The “rest” of the seventh-day Sabbath should be **transferred** to “the Lord’s Day” (i.e., Mithra’s Day).
- “Every Sabbath [seventh day] on account of the burial [of Jesus] is to be regarded in execration [denunciation] of the Jews ... In fact it is not proper to observe, because of Jewish customs, the consumption of food and the ceremonies of the Jews.”⁶
 - This was the first Sunday law. (Recall Daniel 7:25 predicted this.)
 - It was ecclesiastical. Important!
 - Sylvester I was a contemporary of the Roman Emperor Constantine.
 - This is the “pope” that historians refer to when writing of the Catholic Church changing the Sabbath.

Though the Catholic Church was not formalized until much later, they claim Sylvester I was the “pope” who made this change.

⁵ Flavius Vopiscus, *The Deified Aurelian*, chap. 35, in Loeb Classical Library, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Vol. 3, pp. 263, 265; H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, Vol. 5, part 1, pp. 264, 312; S. W. Stevenson, C. R. Smith, and F. W. Madden, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins*, p. 753, art. “Sol”; *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 12, pp. 193, 309, 719. In *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 5 of Plates, pp. 238, 231, there is shown a photographic reproduction of coins minted by the emperor Aurelian. The Latin inscription on the coins clearly shows the titles *Sol Dominus Imperii Romani and Soli Invicto*.

⁶ “Pope” Sylvester, 314-335 C.E., “*Adversus Graecorum*,” S.R.E. Humbert, PL 143, p. 936.

Sylvester I influenced Constantine to issue *Dies Solis* on March 7, 321 A.D.:

“On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.”⁷

- Constantine sent reinforced the order to all soldiers, ordering that they honor the sun on the first day of the week.
 - They had to recite a prayer (which he gave) at sunrise on Sunday morning –
 - **And** – worship Mithra – the sun god.
- Many point to Constantine as the first emperor to enforce a sun day law.
 - BUT – it was in support of apostate Christianity
 - **And** – Mithraism!

Sylvester I, in his bitter anti-Semitism, wrote:

“Sunday is to be observed joyfully by the Christians on account of the resurrection, then every Sabbath on account of the burial is to be regarded in execration [loathing or cursing] of the Jews.”⁸

- This is where the claim began that the Sabbath was changed to honor **Christ’s resurrection**.
- There is no Biblical authority for this! But yet, it fulfills many prophecies.

Eusebius Pamphili, bishop of Caesarea, Palestine (265-340 A.D.), wrote:

- “‘All things’ he says, ‘whatever that it was duty [commanded by God] to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s day.’”⁹
- But the Sunday argument, groundless as it was, served to embolden men in trampling upon the Sabbath of the Lord. All who desired to be honored by the world accepted the popular festival.
- The ecclesiastical influence of worshiping on the first day of the week had now moved from Rome to throughout the Empire!

⁷ *Codex Justinianus*, lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3 (5th ed.; New York: Scribner, 1902), p. 380, note 1.

⁸ Quoted by Cardinal S.R.E. Humbert, *Adversus Graecorum calumnias* 6, PL 143, 937 1054 AD.

⁹ Eusebius' *Commentary on the Psalms* (Psalm 92, *A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day*), in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXIII, col. 1171 & 1172, and Bernard de Montfaucon's *Collectio Nova Patrum Et Scriptorum Graecorum* (2 vols., folio, Paris, 1706).

It was in this setting that Satan was ready to formalize his rebellion within the Christian church. The Sabbath issue was the **first** to be addressed.

Constantine, calling himself Pontifex Maximus (initially in reference to Mithraism), now uses this power and authority over all Christianity and calls a Christian church council - The Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.).



- Constantine was the self-appointed chairman!
- This formulated the Nicene Creed.
- It is used by many churches today with various modifications.

Important: There were then two parallel religions in the Roman Empire:

- Paganism and Christianity
- Constantine was in support of both.
- A local spin-off council occurred in 364 A.D. – the Laodicean Council.
- Significant decisions for the whole church were made there, i.e., maintaining order among Roman bishops, clerics and laypeople (canons 3–5, 11–13, 21–27, 40–44, 56–57). It:
 1. Enforced modest behavior of clerics and laypeople (4, 27, 30, 36, 53–55)
 2. Regulated the approach to heretics (any opposing Christians) (canons 6–10, 31–34, 37), Jews (canons 16, 37–38) and pagans (canon 39)
 3. Outlawed the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) and encouraged rest on the Lord’s Day (Sunday) (canon 29)
 4. Outlined liturgical practices (canons 14–20, 21–23, 25, 28, 58–59)
 5. Created restrictions during Lent (canons 45, 49–52)
 6. Declared what the Biblical canon was (canons 59–60). The Book of Revelation was not included.¹⁰

The “Sabbath” – “Sunday” Issue

“Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord’s day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians” (Canon 29), Council of Laodicea – 364 A.D.

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Laodicea

Satan's Next Step: Make the Bishops of Rome Power Hungry

Rome, the center of the Empire, was beckoning to ***control all religions*** everywhere!

- BUT – they had religious competitors in Alexandria, Egypt and –
- In Constantinople (where Constantine had moved the capital of the Roman Empire)
- In these places also were ***power-hungry religious men.***

Satan wanted that power centralized!

- It wouldn't really fully happen until Pope Gregory the Great – the first “real” pope around 600 A.D.
- ***But a major step occurred in 380 A.D. This is stunning!***

Emperor Flavius Theodosius I came to the Roman throne (379-395).

- He reunited the eastern and western portions of the Empire.
- Centralizing power in a fractured empire had begun.



Theodosius I called another church council – the ***Council of Constantinople*** (381 A.D.).

- ***This became perhaps the most important church–state meeting ever for Satan's strategy.***
- He defined how the church leadership would work.

Ecclesiastically:

- The Nicene trinitarianism was reinforced.
- The “mysteries” of the third member of the Godhead were “defined.”
- Sunday worship was now given force in the Christian world.

In Codex Theodosianus 11.7.13, he decreed the *mandatory observance* of the first day of the week as the Lord's Day for Christianity.

“Let the course of all law suits and all business cease on Sunday, which our fathers have rightly called the Lord's day, and let no one try to collect either a public or a private debt; and let there be no hearing of disputes by any judges either those required to serve by law or those voluntarily chosen by disputants.

And he is to be held not only infamous but sacrilegious who has turned away from the service and observance of holy religion on that day.”¹¹

“On the following occasions all amusements of the theaters and the circuses shall be denied throughout all cities to the people thereof, and the minds of Christians and of the faithful shall be wholly occupied in the worship of God: namely, on the Lord’s day, which is the first day of the whole week, on the Natal Day and Epiphany of Christ, and on the day of Easter and of Pentecost, as long as the vestments that imitate the light of the celestial font attest to the new light of holy baptism; at the time also when the commemoration of the Apostolic Passion, the teacher of all Christianity, is duly celebrated by everyone.”^{12,13}

Secularly and ecclesiastically, something else vital happened:

- ***Paganism was outlawed.*** *Why is this different from Constantine’s law and even more important?*
 - Overnight “Christians” began to be militant, hate-filled and destructive.
 - The spirit of apostate Christianity began to show its **real** character!
 - Pagan priests were murdered.
 - Pagan temples were either destroyed or confiscated for “Christian” use.
 - Libraries of incredible historical value were burned.
 - The great Library of Alexandria, Egypt, was destroyed. Historically, a tragedy of unequalled importance.
 - Hypatia, one of the greatest female philosophers, mathematicians and astronomers, was murdered and cut into pieces.
 - “Christian” priests carried these body pieces to cities around the Empire to show what happens to any leader that is anti-Christian.

Can you see what Satan has accomplished?

1. First, he brought sin into the world.
2. Then he successfully enticed the world to worship the light of the sun.
3. He got the chosen Hebrew nation to reject the true light – Jesus Christ.
4. He tainted the new Christian religion towards false worship.
5. Sun-day was shared by:

¹¹ http://community-2.webtv.net/Tales_of_the_Western_World/

¹² <http://biblelight.net/sylvester-1.htm>

¹³ Law of Theodosius II, Feb. 1, 425, in *Theodosian Code* 15.5.5 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ; 1952).

- a. Pagans
 - b. Christians
6. Paganism was outlawed – the last competition for the apostate Christian church is gone.
 7. Satan now has his church (portrayed in Revelation 17 in scarlet/purple/jewels) deceive the world.

What would the Christian church do with all the pagan worshipers, undoubtedly tens of thousands of sun/icon/idol worshipers?

- Valerian had already made Mithra's birthday, December 25, a public holiday. Let's make that the date of Christ's birth.
- Adopt the imagery of the female god Isis, feeding her son Horus, as Mary the mother of Jesus, feeding her son.
- Make the spring equinox the passion week and then Easter:
 - Honoring the rising sun in the east
- Make the sun a central icon of the Christian faith:
 - Make Easter a ***sunrise*** service



Sunburst above St. Peter's Chair

The Roman Catholic Church was born!

The Dark Ages saw persecution – much of it was Sabbath-related.

Fast forward:

- Prophecy has rich information that the Sabbath issue will be pivotal at the end – with persecution from the apostate Christian church – Babylon.
- It will ***herald Satan's last*** moves to establish his authority. It will also announce God's last moves in redemptive history.
- ***Ezekiel***, prophetically, introduced end-time Sabbath issues – then ***Daniel***. Jesus told his disciples and us: If you want to know the rest of the end-time story, go to Daniel where it talks about the ***abomination*** that leads to ***desolation*** – the desecration of the Sabbath (Matthew 24:15).

God wants us to see the “sun” of righteousness (Malachi 4:2) and everything He stands for.

Satan wants us to see the sun of this world and the liturgy of man.

Lucifer – the *“light bearer”* – became Satan – the bearer of a *false light*. He has been quite successful. But his time is now short.

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