

December 22, 2024

Dear Brethren and Friends,

It is at times like this, when the world is engulfed in its holidays, that we, as Christians, do not belong. For now, we are simply a curiosity for not celebrating Christmas, New Year, or other customs throughout the year.

But the time is coming—it has been prophesied—that true Christians will become the object of persecution, just as Jesus Christ, His apostles and disciples were in their generation (compare John 15:20).

Note what Jesus said would happen at the time of the end (our time):

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9); also, "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake" (Luke 21:12).

In our relative comfort and along with the lack of notice of us, Christians are able to worship God freely, for the most part. However, we already now begin to see that some of our beliefs don't fit in. Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day has caused problems for brethren in Germany because of required school attendance. Observing the Sabbath is not always easy when employers require members to work at that time. For some, even family members reject our beliefs, and this has caused a strain on relationships.

However, the great challenge we will face is the establishment of a world religion which will require mandatory worship. A political leader of unprecedented power (called "the beast") is prophesied to appear on the world scene, and he will persecute true Christians:

"It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:7-8).

While none of the various offshoots of the former *Worldwide Church of God* are suffering dire persecution, most claim to substantially adhere to the original doctrines taught under the leadership of Herbert W. Armstrong. It is those beliefs which will bring persecution to the fore in the time ahead.

We can see that many prophecies are finding their initial fulfillment and thus leading to the period of time we call the Great Tribulation.

We must understand that Satan the Devil will very shortly give great power to the beast and false prophet (a religious leader) to deceive all of humanity (compare Revelation 13). Also, during that time, Satan will severely persecute Church of God members who have not been watching world affairs or have not stayed close to God in order to be ready for what is coming:

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

Matthew 25, verses 1-12, contains a warning to the Church of God about staying close to God and drawing from the power of His Holy Spirit—especially, at the close of this age. Jesus instructs us in verse 13: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”

Jesus also said:

“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34-36).

The Apostle Peter wrote with the perspective of the end of the age in 2 Peter, chapter 3. Here is his admonition:

“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (verses 17-18).

Regardless of the terrible times coming at the end of this age and before the return of Jesus Christ, the Church of God has the commission to accomplish a Work of preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14).

To that end, we are being led by Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church of God, to finish our part in the Work of God. As never before and with renewed commitment, let us be faithfully doing what God has set before us!

Writing about our immediate future with these very fearful warnings from the Word of God is for the purpose of making us ready—for the events which lie ahead and for the return of Jesus Christ.

Many of course do not know the true Jesus Christ of the Bible, nor do they believe in His Second Coming. We have prepared and sent out last week to our subscribers printed copies of our new free booklet, *“Who Is Jesus Christ? His many Descriptions in the Bible!”* If you have not received a copy, or if you would like to obtain one, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

In Christ’s Service,



Dave Harris