

# The Man Of Sin And Roman Catholicism

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It is written:

“LET NO ONE DECEIVE YOU BY ANY MEANS; FOR *THAT DAY WILL NOT COME* UNLESS THE FALLING AWAY COMES FIRST, AND THE MAN OF SIN IS REVEALED, THE SON OF PERDITION, **4** WHO OPPOSES AND EXALTS HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD OR THAT IS WORSHIPED, SO THAT HE SITS AS GOD IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, SHOWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD. **5** DO YOU NOT REMEMBER THAT WHEN I WAS STILL WITH YOU I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? **6** AND NOW YOU KNOW WHAT IS RESTRAINING, THAT HE MAY BE REVEALED IN HIS OWN TIME. **7** FOR THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS IS ALREADY AT WORK; ONLY HE WHO NOW RESTRAINS *WILL DO SO* UNTIL HE IS TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY. **8** AND THEN THE LAWLESS ONE WILL BE REVEALED, WHOM THE LORD WILL CONSUME WITH THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH AND DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING. **9** THE COMING OF THE *LAWLESS ONE* IS ACCORDING TO THE WORKING OF SATAN, WITH ALL POWER, SIGNS, AND LYING WONDERS, **10** AND WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUS DECEPTION AMONG THOSE WHO PERISH, BECAUSE THEY DID NOT RECEIVE THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED. **11** AND FOR THIS REASON GOD WILL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE THE LIE, **12** THAT THEY ALL MAY BE CONDEMNED WHO DID NOT BELIEVE THE TRUTH BUT HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.” (2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-12)

Let's study.

## The Temple Of God

Some believe that this is a reference to a third Jewish temple that will be rebuilt before the Second Coming of Christ. Indeed, some are working very hard to try and get this “third temple” built!

“The Illustrated London News, August 28, 1909, ran a spectacular supplement detailing this goal. The article was titled, “The Freemason’s Plan to Rebuild Solomon’s Temple at Jerusalem.” Three years later, September 22, 1912, the New York Times published an outline by Freemasons to rebuild the Temple under the title, “Solomon’s Temple: Scheme of Freemasons and Opinions of Jews on Rebuilding.”...Others, including Rabbi Matityahu Glazerson, who accurately predicted the Trump victory before the election using Bible codes,[15] have chimed in. Glazerson found various connections between Trump and moshiah (“messiah”) in the codes, which in Hebrew means “anointed,” and led Glazerson to conclude that his election is connected to the coming of Messiah....More recently, the Sanhedrin authorized the minting of two coins—the “Half Shekel Cyrus Trump Temple Coin,” and shortly thereafter, the “70 Years Israel Redemption Temple Coin,” both of which depict Donald Trump and the ancient Persian King Cyrus (who empowered the building of the Second Temple) on the front side with the Third Temple on the back. In an article for Breaking Israel News, the reasons for the commemorative coins were tied specifically to the Trump administration as the catalyst for building the Third Temple. In fact, rabbis associated with the effort go so far as to say the success of Trump’s presidency depends on his efforts to initiate the building of the new Solomon-like house of worship. “In gratitude to US President Donald Trump for recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Jerusalem, the nascent Sanhedrin and the Mikdash (Temple) Educational Center are minting a replica of the silver half-shekel Biblically mandated to be donated by every Jewish male to the Temple,” the report stated, before adding, “Rabbi Weiss stressed that Trump’s [US administration] goals will come to fruition only if they are geared towards rebuilding the Jewish Temple” (emphasis added)....To further stipulate the role that the rabbis see Trump divinely appointed to perform, the following amazing statement is published inside the official Sanhedrin sanctioned “70 Years Israel” Redemption Coin brochure: President Trump is advancing a prophetic process that will usher in—when the time comes—the rebuilding of the Third Temple. It is as if he is following in the footsteps of King Cyrus who pronounced, after 70 years of Jewish exile, that: Hashem, the Lord of the World, charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem. (bold added)” (Thomas R. Horn, *The Rabbis, Donald Trump, And The Top-Secret Plan To Build The Third Temple: Unveiling The Incendiary Scheme By Religious Authorities, Government Agents, And Jewish Rabbis To Invoke Messiah*, 277-384 (Kindle Edition): Defender Publishing)

It is frightening to consider that so many through the ages have worked so hard and engineer a third Jewish temple, partially based upon this passage of Scripture.

Yet is Paul here talking about a third Jewish temple, one that will be rebuilt before the Second Coming of Christ?

The word “temple” that Paul uses here is from the Greek word naos. One way to understand the meaning of a word is to see how that same word is used by the same author. It just so happens that Paul uses the word naos throughout his writings. Let’s notice what it means:

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17-DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE TEMPLE (NAOS) OF GOD AND *THAT* THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU? 17 IF ANYONE DEFILES THE TEMPLE (NAOS) OF GOD, GOD WILL DESTROY HIM. FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, WHICH *TEMPLE* YOU ARE.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODY IS THE TEMPLE (NAOS) OF THE HOLY SPIRIT *WHO IS* IN YOU, WHOM YOU HAVE FROM GOD, AND YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN?

2 CORINTHIANS 6:16-AND WHAT AGREEMENT HAS THE TEMPLE (NAOS) OF GOD WITH IDOLS? FOR YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD. AS GOD HAS SAID: "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM. I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE."

EPHESIANS 2:21-IN WHOM THE WHOLE BUILDING, BEING FITTED TOGETHER, GROWS INTO A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE LORD,

2 THESSALONIANS 2:4-WHO OPPOSES AND EXALTS HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD OR THAT IS WORSHIPED, SO THAT HE SITS AS GOD IN THE TEMPLE (NAOS) OF GOD, SHOWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD.

EVERY time that Paul uses the Greek word naos, he has reference to one entity: the church of Christ. Whatever the man of sin is, he will rise up in the CHURCH.

Now, could there be a secondary reference to a Jewish temple? After all, it is fair to point out, the study of prophecy in the Bible reveals that many passages may have a secondary application or understanding (such as in types and antitypes). Further, it is also true that the Greek word naos outside of Paul’s writings did have reference to the Jewish temple

(cf. Matthew 23:16-17, 21, 35; 26:61; 27:5, 40, 1; Mark 14:58; 15:29, 38; Luke 1:9, 1-22; 23:5; John 2:19-21). While nothing in the passage suggests that the temple of God is anything except the church, it is worth noting that at least two of the early “church fathers” believed this to be a reference to a third rebuilt Jewish temple.

“Once this Antichrist has devastated everything in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem. And then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds.” (Irenaeus (c. 180, E/W), 1.560)

“The Savior raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, and he (antichrist, M.T.) will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem.” (Hippolytus (c. 200, W), 5.206.)

Regardless, when we follow the way that the Apostle Paul used the Greek word *naos* (temple), he clearly had primary reference to the church of Christ.

### The Man of Sin In Context

The text itself gives us many clues as to the identity of this “man of sin.” He is identified as: “the man of sin” (vs. 4); the “son of perdition” (vs. 4); the “mystery of lawlessness” (vs. 7); and “the lawless one” (vs. 8-9). The first clue which stands out about these designations is the fact that he is identified as “the son of perdition” (vs. 4). This phrase was only used one other time in Scripture, during the prayer of Jesus in the Garden before His arrest. Speaking of Judas Iscariot, Jesus says:

JOHN 17:12-WHILE I WAS WITH THEM IN THE WORLD, I KEPT THEM IN YOUR NAME. THOSE WHOM YOU GAVE ME I HAVE KEPT; AND NONE OF THEM IS LOST EXCEPT THE SON OF PERDITION, THAT THE SCRIPTURE MIGHT BE FULFILLED.

Judas was an apostate from Christ. He was a follower of the Lord who chose to turn his back on Him. Thus, this man of sin will be something which is identified as Christian but which turns its back on Christ and His Word. What’s more, the Apostle Paul uses the exact same expression in describing the man of sin as does the Book of Zechariah in the Greek translation of the Old Testament:

ZECHARIAH 5:1-8-THEN I TURNED AND RAISED MY EYES, AND SAW THERE A FLYING SCROLL. 2 AND HE SAID TO ME, "WHAT DO YOU SEE?" SO I ANSWERED, "I SEE A FLYING SCROLL. ITS LENGTH IS TWENTY CUBITS AND ITS WIDTH TEN CUBITS." 3 THEN HE SAID TO ME, "THIS IS THE CURSE THAT GOES OUT OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH: 'EVERY THIEF SHALL BE

EXPELLED,' ACCORDING *TO* THIS SIDE OF *THE SCROLL*; AND, 'EVERY PERJURER SHALL BE EXPELLED,' ACCORDING *TO* THAT SIDE OF IT." 4 "I WILL SEND OUT *THE CURSE*," SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS; "IT SHALL ENTER THE HOUSE OF THE THIEF AND THE HOUSE OF THE ONE WHO SWEARS FALSELY BY MY NAME. IT SHALL REMAIN IN THE MIDST OF HIS HOUSE AND CONSUME IT, WITH ITS TIMBER AND STONES." 5 THEN THE ANGEL WHO TALKED WITH ME CAME OUT AND SAID TO ME, "LIFT YOUR EYES NOW, AND SEE WHAT THIS *IS* THAT GOES FORTH." 6 SO I ASKED, "WHAT *IS* IT?" AND HE SAID, "IT *IS* A BASKET THAT IS GOING FORTH." HE ALSO SAID, "THIS *IS* THEIR RESEMBLANCE THROUGHOUT THE EARTH: 7 HERE *IS* A LEAD DISC LIFTED UP, AND THIS *IS* A WOMAN SITTING INSIDE THE BASKET"; 8 THEN HE SAID, "THIS *IS* WICKEDNESS!" AND HE THRUST HER DOWN INTO THE BASKET, AND THREW THE LEAD COVER OVER ITS MOUTH. 9 THEN I RAISED MY EYES AND LOOKED, AND THERE *WERE* TWO WOMEN, COMING WITH THE WIND IN THEIR WINGS; FOR THEY HAD WINGS LIKE THE WINGS OF A STORK, AND THEY LIFTED UP THE BASKET BETWEEN EARTH AND HEAVEN. 10 SO I SAID TO THE ANGEL WHO TALKED WITH ME, "WHERE ARE THEY CARRYING THE BASKET?" 11 AND HE SAID TO ME, "TO BUILD A HOUSE FOR IT IN THE LAND OF SHINAR; WHEN IT IS READY, *THE BASKET* WILL BE SET THERE ON ITS BASE."

Some incredible Old Testament scholars have pointed out:

"As two "anointed ones" (Zec 4:14) stand by the Lord as His ministers, so two winged women execute His purpose here in removing the embodiment of "wickedness": answering to the "mystery of iniquity" (the Septuagint here in Zechariah uses the same words as Paul and "the man of sin," whom the Lord shall destroy with the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming, 2Th 2:3, 2Th 2:7, 2Th 2:8)." (Jamison-Fausset-Brown)

This tells us that the "man of sin" is somehow connected with Babylon (the land of Shinar), as well as with apostate Christianity. Yet, what is particularly interesting about this is that by the time of Zechariah, there was another nation in Jewish writing that was being referred to metaphorically as Babylon. Barclay has documented:

"HERE the doom of Rome is prophesied. Throughout Revelation, Rome is described as Babylon, a description which was common between the Testaments. The writer of 2 Baruch begins his pronouncement against Rome: 'I, Baruch, say this against you, Babylon' (2 Baruch 11:1). When the Sibylline Oracles describe the imagined flight of Nero from Rome, they say: 'Then shall flee from Babylon a king shameless and fearless,

whom all mortals and the noble men loathe' (Sibylline Oracles 5:143). In the ancient days, to the prophets, Babylon had been the very incarnation of power and lust and luxury and sin; and, to the early Jewish Christians, Babylon seemed to have been reborn in the lust and luxury and immorality of Rome....Babylon is said to have made all the nations drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication. In this phrase, two Old Testament ideas have been fused into one. In Jeremiah 51:7, it is said of Babylon: 'Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine, and so the nations went mad.' The idea is that Babylon had been a corrupting force which had lured the nations into a kind of insane immorality. The background is the picture of a prostitute persuading a man into immorality by filling him full of wine, so that he could no longer resist her seductive charms. Rome has been like that, like some glittering prostitute seducing the world." (William Barclay, The New Daily Study Bible: The Revelation Of John, Volume Two, 125-126 (Kindle Edition); Louisville, KY; Westminster John Knox Press)

So, the "man of sin" would have direct connection to the nation of Rome.

Finally, the phrase used here and translated as "lawless one" is connected with the ancient book of Enoch, in describing the rise of the nephilim in the land.

Enoch 7:6-Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.

The nephilim were the direct result of rebellion against God between once-faithful angels and humans. We see another reference to the fact that this "man of sin" would involve rebellion amongst those once in right relationship with God.

### Is The "Man Of Sin" Really "A" Man?

But is this "man" really "a man?" One of the reasons that this "man of sin" cannot logically be referring to one person is the fact that Paul said he was already starting to come to power in his own day (i.e., in the first century); yet would be around to be destroyed at the time of the Second Coming!

2 THESSALONIANS 2:7-FOR THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS IS ALREADY AT WORK; ONLY HE WHO NOW RESTRAINS *WILL DO SO* UNTIL HE IS TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:8-AND THEN THE LAWLESS ONE WILL BE REVEALED, WHOM THE LORD WILL CONSUME WITH THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH AND DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING.

“Let’s go back to Paul’s prophecy. A careful study of 2 Thessalonians 2 actually reveals the utter impossibility of “the man of sin” applying to only one Mr. Diabolical. First of all, Paul said that in his own day this very same “mystery of lawlessness [was] already at work” (vs. 7). Thus this predicted antichrist was already becoming active in the first century. Paul was also very emphatic that this “mystery” would continue all the way down to the second coming of Jesus Christ (vs. 8). Put the pieces together. How could this refer to only one human being? He would have to be 2,000 years old!” (Steve Wohlberg, End Time Delusions: The Rapture, The Antichrist, Israel, and The End Of The World, 72 (Kindle Edition); Shippensburg, PA; Treasure House)

Again;

“Our next consideration involves the problem of whether Paul is referring to a certain individual, a human being, or to a composite personality as would be the case of those who hold a certain office, or of an organization which has a certain continuity, although in different periods it is composed of different persons....Paul refers to the Church as a man (Greek anthropos) (Eph. 2:15). After writing of how Jesus had broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, he indicates the purpose he had in mind was “for to make in himself of twain one new man, [anthropos] so making peace.” Although he uses the term anthropos only of the Church, there is no escaping the fact that he also thought of the Jews as one man and the Gentiles as another man. These two are combined in Christ to make one man where two had formerly existed. Scofield’s note on this verse admits as much. It reads in part, “Here the ‘new man’ is not the individual believer but the Church, considered as the body of Christ.” I am in agreement with this opinion. Of course, it will be contended that this is a figure of speech. That has merit, but can it be proved that Paul was not also using a figure of speech in II Thessalonians 2:3 when he spoke of the man of sin or lawlessness? It may just as well be a figure of speech as Ephesians 2:15.” (Everett Carver, When Jesus Comes Again, 6296-6319 (Kindle Edition); Prestonsburg KY; Reformation Publishers)

It seems clear that the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2 is not one specific person; but rather an entire power structure which would arise within the church.

### The Restraining Power

Now, Paul had told the Thessalonians that there was some kind of restraining power keeping the man of sin at bay, and that he had told them more about these matters. Did they write about the restraining power? Yes they did. They testified that the restraining power was the nation of Rome.

“The traditional view has been that the restraining principle is the Roman empire and the restrainer the emperor.1907 This view, or a modification of it, fits best into the Pauline theology.” (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology Of The New Testament*, 605-606 (Kindle Edition); Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company)

The testimony from the early church fathers is clear that the “restraining power,” which was keeping back the man of sin, was the Roman Empire.

Therefore, the fall of the Roman Empire (which began to take place in 476 A.D.) would herald the arrival of the “man of sin.”

### The Pope

Only one institution fits the mold of the man of sin; the Roman Catholic pope.

Yet where did the papacy originate? How did it come about? Our Roman Catholic friends answer that the first pope was none other than the Apostle Peter. We are told that Jesus made Peter the pope in Matthew 16:18, when Christ declared “... You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church.” Since the word “Peter” in Greek literally means a small detached stone, it is argued that the Lord here promised to build His church on the Apostle Peter. However, that the Catholic interpretation of this text is erroneous is obvious for several reasons.

Notice that Jesus changed tense when speaking with Peter. He went from second to third person. He did not say, “You are Peter, and UPON YOU I will build My church.” Instead, He declared, “You are Peter (second person), and upon THIS ROCK (third person) I will build My church.” This change in person shows that the rock was obviously something besides Peter. As White has pointed out:

Again, the Greek of the passage powerfully demonstrates that there is a difference between Peter and the Rock upon which the church is built.

“Roman Catholics claim that Christ was proclaiming that Peter was “the rock” and that Jesus would build His church upon him. However, in the original Greek we find that the word used for Peter is “petros”, which refers to a small stone or pebble while the word used for rock is “petra”, which indicates a large rock or cliff. It should also be noted that “petros” is masculine while “petra” is feminine. This makes it abundantly obvious that Christ's statement of verse 18 was actually in reference to the statement Peter had made about Him (Christ) in verse 16 (“thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.”)”



(Charles G.B. Evans, Ph.D., Why I Question The Roman Catholic Faith, 287-1293 (Kindle Edition); [www.victorythroughjesus.com](http://www.victorythroughjesus.com))

Notice also that both Mark (8:27-29) and Luke (9:18-21) end the conversation with Peter's confession of Jesus as the Son of God. Clearly, they understood that the church is built on Jesus, not on the Apostle Peter! This is especially interesting when we consider that Mark was narrating his Gospel based on the words of Peter himself!

It is also worth noting that the majority of the church fathers who commented on Matthew 16:18 understood the Rock to be Peter's confession of Jesus. As even the Roman Catholic authorities have pointed out:

“All this is intelligible enough, if we look at the patristic interpretation of the words of Christ to St. Peter. Of all the Fathers who have exegetically explained these passages in the Gospels (Matt. xvi. 18, John xxi. 17), not a single one applies them to the Roman bishops as Peter's successors. How many Fathers have busied themselves with these texts, yet not one of them...—Origen, Chrysostom, Hilary, Augustine, Cyril, Theodoret, and those whose interpretations are collected in catenas,—has dropped the faintest hint that the primacy of Rome is the consequence of the commission and promise to Peter! NOT ONE OF THEM HAS EXPLAINED THE ROCK OR FOUNDATION ON WHICH CHRIST WOULD BUILD HIS CHURCH OF THE OFFICE GIVEN TO PETER TO BE TRANSMITTED TO HIS SUCCESSORS, BUT THEY UNDERSTOOD BY IT EITHER CHRIST HIMSELF, OR PETER'S CONFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST; OFTEN BOTH TOGETHER. OR ELSE THEY THOUGHT PETER WAS THE FOUNDATION EQUALLY WITH ALL THE OTHER APOSTLES, THE TWELVE BEING TOGETHER THE FOUNDATIONS-STONES OF THE CHURCH. (Apoc. xxi. 14).” (Janus, Von Dollinger, Janus, The Pope And The Council, 90-91 (Kindle Edition, emphasis added M.T.); Pneuma Press)

The Apostle Peter was not the first pope, and he was not the foundation of the church of Christ.

### Tracking The Great Apostasy

So where did the pope of the Roman Catholic Church originate?

In the church that Christ built, every congregation (local group of saved individuals) were to assemble and work together regularly (Hebrews 10:24-25). Every local “church” was united together in following the simple pattern of work and worship outlined in the sacred Writings of Christ's Apostles (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:13). In these

congregations, where men were qualified, there were to be elders appointed to lead the local congregation (1 Peter 5:1-5; Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1). These elders were also identified as pastors (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11-15). Please notice from this last passage that “pastors” are different from “evangelists” or “preachers.” The Apostles foretold that there would be a falling away from the Divine order that God gave to church, and sadly, it would begin within the church.

ACTS 20:29-31-FOR I KNOW THIS, THAT AFTER MY DEPARTURE SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME IN AMONG YOU, NOT SPARING THE FLOCK. **30** ALSO FROM AMONG YOURSELVES MEN WILL RISE UP, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEMSELVES. **31** THEREFORE WATCH, AND REMEMBER THAT FOR THREE YEARS I DID NOT CEASE TO WARN EVERYONE NIGHT AND DAY WITH TEARS.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5-NOW THE SPIRIT EXPRESSLY SAYS THAT IN LATTER TIMES SOME WILL DEPART FROM THE FAITH, GIVING HEED TO DECEIVING SPIRITS AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS, **2** SPEAKING LIES IN HYPOCRISY, HAVING THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE SEARED WITH A HOT IRON, **3** FORBIDDING TO MARRY, *AND COMMANDING* TO ABSTAIN FROM FOODS WHICH GOD CREATED TO BE RECEIVED WITH THANKSGIVING BY THOSE WHO BELIEVE AND KNOW THE TRUTH. **4** FOR EVERY CREATURE OF GOD *IS* GOOD, AND NOTHING IS TO BE REFUSED IF IT IS RECEIVED WITH THANKSGIVING; **5** FOR IT IS SANCTIFIED BY THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER.

Remember that this “falling away” is associated by Paul with the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. Church history reveals that this apostasy began in the first century when some congregations began to elevate one man over the rest of the elders in a local congregation. With time, he took control of the local church; and then that church began taking control over other churches in the area.

“As the city churches began to evangelize those in the country, the city bishops began to assume authority over the country bishops. These were called the Metropolitans. Thus began the avenue by which the organizational structure eventually evolved into the hierarchical form of church government that exists today in the Catholic and some Protestant churches. BISHOPS over elders (beginning in the second century). METROPOLITANS (city bishops over country bishops). PATRIARCHS in five cities (Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Rome).” (Calvin Fields, 10, 000 Faces Of Christianity: What Face Have You Seen? 5569-5574 (Kindle Edition); Xulon Press)

The following is written by a former Roman Catholic who became a member of the church of Christ after a very intense and heart wrenching investigation. He was encouraged to read a public debate that took place well over a hundred years ago between a member of the church of Christ and a Roman Catholic priest. He writes:

“However, his opponent was no slouch either. Described as a careful student of New Testament Greek, an outstanding educator, editor, and author, Alexander Campbell founded Bethany College in West Virginia, published two journals for a combined forty-two years, wrote several books, published a translation of the New Testament, addressed the United States Congress upon their dismissal of a session in order to hear him preach, and packed all church buildings wherever he spoke. When I read that all religious bodies in the United States had been influenced by this man because he almost single-handedly forced men to re-examine cherished traditions to see if they conformed to the truth of God, I knew this man did his homework and would press Bishop Purcell with his research. But, hey! That’s exactly what I want. No Catholic is going to question a bishop’s lecture on the origin of the pope, but how will it hold up when confronted by this Campbell fellow?... Campbell then quoted Du Pin, the Catholic historian. “St. Gregory does not only oppose this title in the patriarch of Constantinople, but maintains also, that it cannot agree to any other bishop, and that the bishop of Rome neither ought, nor can assume it.... [Peter] was not called universal apostle. That the title of universal bishop is against the rules of the gospel [the Scriptures], and the appointment of the canons [the laws formulated at the Church councils]: that there cannot be a universal bishop.” 2 Campbell then resumed his comments. But at this time [near the end of the 6th century] the patriarchs of Constantinople [John] and Rome [Gregory] were contending for the supremacy [of the church], and while it appeared to Gregory that his rival of the east was likely to process the title, he [Gregory] saw in it, everything anti-Christian and profane. When a new dynasty, however ascended the [Emperor’s] throne and offered the title to a Roman bishop, it [the title of universal patriarch] lost all its blasphemy and impiety, and we [then] find the successor of Gregory can wear the title of universal patriarch when tendered him by Phocas [the new Emperor], without the least scrupulosity. It is then a fact worthy of much consideration in this discussion, that John, bishop of Constantinople, first assumed the title of universal head of the whole Christian church, and that the bishop of Rome [Gregory] did in that case oppose it as anti-scriptural and anti-christian. Concerning the reputation of St. Gregory, I need not be profuse. Of the Gregories he is deservedly called the Great. Renowned in history as the one who stamped his own image on the Roman world for a period of five hundred years, yet he could not brook the idea of a pope, especially when about to be bestowed on his rival at Constantinople. St. Gregory, be it remembered, says Du Pin, did not only oppose the title in the case of John the Faster, as proud, heretical, blasphemous, &c., but could not agree to its being assumed by any other bishop; he affirmed that the bishops of Rome ought not, dare not, cannot

assume this pompous and arrogant title. Thus stood matters as respects a supreme head up to within 14 years of the close of the 6th century. 3 Distressed, I wanted to tear out the page and burn it. But I would only be reacting dishonestly with the established and unchangeable facts of history. What had happened, happened. I dropped the book to my chest and stared at the ceiling. Wow! I thought with astonishment. No universal bishop until at least 588 A.D.! And when the first one finally arose, it was only the result of a power struggle between the two bishops of the two most important cities of the day. Unfortunately, a Catholic historian proved my earlier suspicions correct: the office of the pope was created by men, NOT God; and it was created centuries after the Church began. Even Gregory, the bishop of Rome, who would have been the pope if there was a pope, emphatically denied the Church to have a universal bishop over the universal Church. So, Gregory, one of the four most prominent patriarchs of the Church in that day, lets us know there was no universal bishop in the Church from its beginning unto at least 588 A.D.!” (Gary Henson, *The Ivory Domino*, 3266-3366 (Kindle Edition, emphasis added, M.T.)); Charleston, AR; Cobb Publishing)

Henson then observes the Catholic rebuttal to this argument:

“Then, remembering Mr. Babbitt’s advice to observe how Bishop Purcell responded, I made use of his index to read every exchange of both men on this topic. Disappointed, because he was the Catholic champion, but not surprised because even the best cannot overturn the facts of history, Bishop Purcell’s feeble attempts to reply bounced away like pebbles tossed at a brick wall. He first asserted Du Pin was not an authentic historian. 4 Of course, if what Du Pin said cannot be refuted, then try to discredit the author; after all, this is what the Pharisees tried to do with the miracles of Jesus. 5 But the bishop’s diversion went nowhere. Campbell read from the front of Du Pin’s book the endorsements of notable and scholarly Catholics, the theological Doctors of Sorbonne, which included statements as: this book “never... lays down simple conjectures in place of demonstrative proofs”; “I find nothing to hinder its being printed”; and, “we have found nothing therein contrary to the Catholic faith, or to good manners.” 6 In other words, they found nothing wrong with Du Pin’s facts. Campbell added that the book was certified by the guardians of the Catholic press. 7 Campbell also pointed out that the bishop of Bardstown admitted Du Pin to be an “authentic historian.” 8 Even Bishop Purcell conceded, “I will remark that I consider Du Pin a learned man. I would even select him as a splendid illustration of the strength imparted to the human intellect by the Catholic intellectual discipline. He was truly a prodigy of learning and of precision of style.” 9 Campbell pointed out that “other historians record the same fact” 10 as Du Pin had stated which confirmed Du Pin’s historical report even more. Bishop Purcell could do no more than toss a mere pebble at this brick wall, but this pebble left not even a dent. Everything established Du Pin to be an authoritative historian, and, thus confirming, in

606 A.D., Boniface III became the very first pope, ever! The bishop next attempted to discredit Du Pin as a bad Catholic. 11 However, Campbell pointed out that Du Pin was buried in the Catholic Church in consecrated ground, which Bishop Purcell himself, only two or three months earlier, insisted as proof of a man's good Catholic standing. 12 Besides, as Campbell correctly mentioned, 13 even if Du Pin was a bad Catholic, that would have nothing to do with his ability as an authentic historian to report the facts of history. Another pebble fell harmlessly to the ground. Bishop Purcell was running out of pebbles. He even resorted to the unprovable make-believe: "... they may have...", 14 "... they might have been...", 15 "... the most natural supposition." 16 Also, in all of what the bishop said, I noticed he never, as in never-ever, attempted to discredit Du Pin's report of Gregory's denouncement of the existence of a universal bishop in the Church up to his day. Campbell noticed it too, and said, "Can he [Purcell] prove, or has he proved him [Du Pin] unfaithful in stating a single historical fact? Not one." 17 No, the Catholic champion would not discredit Du Pin's facts of history because he could not. He could not falsify Gregory's statement because, as Campbell pointed out, "other historians record the same fact." 18 It would have been as foolish for the bishop to deny those statements of Gregory as to have denied all the historians' records of Columbus sailing to the American continents. The bishop knew that; he knew he could not deny the documents of history. Plain and simple: there was no universal bishop in the Church until Gregory's successor, Boniface III, at the very beginning of the 7th century. Historians knew it. Those who read church history knew it. And now I knew it." (Gary Henson, *The Ivory Domino*, 3326-3363 (Kindle Edition, emphasis added, M.T.); Charleston, AR; Cobb Publishing)

The papacy of the Roman Catholic Church emerged as the result of a power structure with four other cities. It did not have its origin with Christ and His Apostles.

In our next study, we will see what Gary Henson himself learned about the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2.

### Where Do We Go From Here

The following lengthy account describes the discussion between a young man who was a Roman Catholic (at the time), and a member of the church of Christ. I include the entire conversation for your study.

"Wow! A section of verses foretelling the Reformation and the formation of the denominations that fell away from the one, true, original Church! It's just as my Catechism teachers told me. But, doesn't Mr. Babbitt realize that he and his denomination are part of the apostasy? "Now, Gary, take special care in noticing verse 3. The apostasy

is described as ‘the apostasy.’ It is not ‘an apostasy,’ which means one of many, but it is THE apostasy. One so massive, it needs only to be referred to as ‘the apostasy’ in order for everyone to know what He is talking about. It dwarfed any other group that fell away and caused them to pale to insignificance when compared.” Well sure, the Reformation was one big apostasy! “It is popularly taught that this apostasy is the Reformation. But this is impossible.” “What?!” I did not intend to speak out, but his words shocked me. “Look at verse 7. The words, ‘the mystery of iniquity is already at work,’ makes it certain that the apostasy was already beginning when this was written. However, the Reformation did not begin for another 1500 years! So, THE apostasy this passage is writing about cannot possibly be the Reformation.” He’s right, the Reformation can’t be the apostasy. So, just what falling away began to work so early? He pushed on. “It is also said that this apostasy was the Gnostics, or some other such group, that fell away from the church in the early centuries. But, these too, are not the apostasy of these verses.” “And you’re going to tell me why, right?” “The Gnostics, Montanists, Novatians, and the like began early, but they died out in the 5th and 6th centuries. But look what verse 8 declares. The apostasy of this passage will still exist at the Second Coming of Jesus.” I saw what he was saying. “So, Mr. Babbitt, those groups with the weird names ended too early to be THE apostasy, and the Reformation began too late. Well, what is this great apostasy God is talking about?” “Gary, if you think about what God said in this passage, you can figure it out for yourself. Look in the verses at the identifying clues of the apostasy. What is the main feature of the great falling away?” I scanned over the verses. “It has a very powerful leader.” “Right, and most of the verses of 3 through 9 are talking about him. So, what does it say? It says he is ‘the man of sin,’ that is, he transgresses God’s Law. So, his actions and laws do not follow God’s Law. He is also ‘the son of perdition.’ Perdition means destruction. And that means he destroys the church, which, of course, is what an apostasy does. So, by his replacing God’s Law with his laws, the Christians are led away from what the church is supposed to be, resulting in their spiritual destruction.” Although I knew the Catholic Church certainly was not the apostasy, that swung too close for comfort. After all, numerous laws made up by men—laws and practices which did not follow God’s Law—flooded into the Church in the first few centuries. “Now, Gary, what identifying trait of this leader do you find in verse 4?” I read verse 4 again. The toxic description repulsed me. “This man makes himself out to be God!” “Yes, and his traits are quite prominently expressed. Now, verses 6 and 7 declare that this exalted, worshipful leader did not yet exist when this letter was being written because something or someone restrained him from taking that ‘as-if-he-were-God’ position.” “So, this position took time to develop?” I asked. “Correct. Now, the last thing you need to notice is in verse 8. What do you see?” “It says Jesus will slay him at His Second Coming. But, Mr. Babbitt, how can that be? If verse 7 tells us the apostasy and the development of the leader were already beginning back in the 1st century, how can he still be alive at the Second Coming?! Nobody lives for several centuries!” “Of course not.

But a position which is occupied by a succession of men, does.” Well, sure. That’s the only possible answer, unless I want to say God made a big mistake in what He wrote. “Gary, those are the identifying marks of ‘the man of sin’ and the apostasy.” Mr. Babbitt spoke a little slower and as gently as he could. “When you identify ‘the man of sin,’ then you will know the identity of this great apostasy. So take a moment, put it all together, and think it through. You can figure it out.” From past experience with his shift in tone, I sensed his concern for me. I knew what he must be thinking, but I also knew the apostasy wasn’t Catholicism. More concerned now about proving to myself that the apostasy was not Catholicism than I was concerned about finding out what church was the real apostasy, I attacked those identifying marks to show that they did not describe the Catholic Church. Can’t do anything about “the man of sin” though. I mean, his man-made laws certainly cause us Catholics to worship in vain. Matthew 15:9 makes that clear. And then there are all those popes who lived in sinful immoralities of adultery, murder, robbery, and on and on. Also, there are those five to six centuries of popes who plagued humanity with the Inquisition and its insane tortures and stake-burnings. And there are the five centuries of popes who led the Church into the ungodly Crusades that plundered, ravaged, and murdered hundreds of thousands of people. As much as I don’t want to admit it, “the man of sin, the son of destruction” fits the popes far better than any other man in all of history. I took a deep breath to relieve the uneasiness creeping upon me. What was the other clue? Oh, yeah, succession. “The man of sin” is a succession of men. My anxiety returned in a flare-up. And this succession will continue until the Second Coming, which means “the man of sin” and “the apostasy” exists right now! Aw, come on! I shouted to myself. Surely something doesn’t fit! Let’s see, what else do the verses say? Oh, yeah, “the man of sin” took time to develop. Man! It can’t be! Another perfect fit! Going from elders, to a congregational bishop, to archbishops, to patriarchs, to pope definitely took time to develop. My heart beat as rapidly as in a track-meet race. I panicked for any clue that did not fit our pope. Verse 4! What about verse 4? It’s the one most descriptive of “the man of sin.” Surely it doesn’t fit. Let’s see.... Yes, that’s it! “He sits in the temple of God!” We don’t have a temple like that! Not like the Jews did in Jerusalem. The pope doesn’t fit! I felt my shoulders relax. Relief returned. The alarm shut off. No longer fearful of the apostasy being the Catholic Church, I asked Mr. Babbitt where that temple of God was located and what religious group owned it. Then I would know who the apostasy was. “Gary, I can tell you where that temple is located, but first you must understand what the temple in Christianity is.” He pointed to my Bible and said, “See what 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says.” While I turned the pages, I wondered, Why find out what the temple is? It’s a building of bricks or rocks and mortar, isn’t it? But I then found out why he wanted me to read it. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, him God will destroy; for holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are. “Well, Mr. Babbitt,” I said with a struggle and without looking up, “the temple is the people, the church.” “You

see,” he caringly said, “in Christianity, the temple of God is not some building like it was in the Jewish religion, but it is the church. So, ‘the man of sin,’ verse 4 informs us, is set in the highest position in the church, that is, what is thought to be the church because it is really the apostasy.” The tension returned so swiftly I almost got back and shoulder cramps. My heart raced and my shallow breathing quickened. “Gary, when I borrowed your Catechism several weeks ago, I read what it says about the pope. I am sure you and every Catholic throughout the world already know this, but, to its question number 496, ‘Who is the visible Head of the Church?,’ it answers, ‘Our Holy Father the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the Vicar of Christ on earth and the visible Head of the Church.’” He didn’t say it. He didn’t have to. I knew the pope fit this clue. And he fit it perfectly. “And the rest of the verse says....” He pointed at my Bible, indicating I was to read it. “...and gives himself out as if he were God.” “Gary, if you were to tell someone that it is a religious law to go to worship on Sunday, what would you be doing?” “I guess I’d just be telling him what God’s law in the Scriptures tells us.” “That is right. God wrote His law in the Scriptures, and you are merely pointing it out to someone else. But, if you were to tell someone that you say it is a religious law for the church to sacrifice a rabbit during Sunday worship, who would you be making yourself out to be?” “Well, since that’s not in the New Testament, I would be giving a new religious law, and since only God gives religious laws, then...” I paused, “I’d be making myself out to be God.” “And you are correct. As long as you are teaching what the Scriptures already teach, you are but a teacher, something all Christians are to be. But when you make laws that are not taught in the Scriptures, you make yourself out to be God. You see, when a person claims rights only God can claim, he sets himself forth as God.” “I see Mr. Babbitt.” But I wish I didn’t. My one loophole unraveled, and I knew what was coming next. “And Gary,” he spoke even more tenderly, “you have already seen the many laws the popes have made that are not taught in the Scriptures.” “Yeah, I know,” I somehow managed to whisper. The pursuing silence agonized me. Perhaps Mr. Babbitt waited for me to speak first. But I wasn’t going to. I wasn’t going to admit it. Even if we had to sit in silence for the rest of the class, I wasn’t going to admit it. Mr. Babbitt sensed my locked lips, and my agony. Mercifully, he spoke. Then again, maybe it wasn’t so merciful. “This ‘man of sin,’ this succession of men who are exalted above everyone else in the church and make themselves out to be God when they add their own man-made laws, is the identifying mark of the great falling away—the apostasy that began in the 1st century and will continue to exist until the Second Coming of Jesus. “Gary.” He stopped mid-breath, as though regretting to continue. “Of all the religious bodies of people in Christianity, there is only one that fits the description of this verse. And it fits it perfectly.” He did not say which one he meant. He did not have to. I knew the facts all fit—I had been discovering them for weeks. He then turned several pages in his Bible. “Listen to this in 1 Timothy 4, beginning with verse one.” Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;



Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. “This too,” Mr. Babbitt gently explained, “tells us that sometime after this letter was written there would be a departure of Christians from the church. That departure occurred because they followed man-made doctrines. God labeled those teachings as ‘doctrines of devils’ because the added doctrines were not His. Two of the doctrines are identified: the first, ‘forbidding to marry,’ and the second, ‘abstain from meats.’” Double bulls-eye. Celibacy and fish on Friday. Guess who. “Gary, the group who restricts God-approved marriages and meats and has an exalted one-man head of the church that makes laws like he was God is the group that is the apostasy.” My thoughts pounded within my head like the interior of a huge bell. Okay! Okay! Okay! It’s true, the Church did depart from the elders and created a hierarchy of positions with an exalted, one-man leader—the pope! And true, the Church did add numerous man-made doctrines—doctrines of devils, the Bible calls them—that we still practice today! And it’s a fact, forgeries were made to make it look like those practices were done by the original church! And it really happened, Tradition was invented to make it look like God authorizes all those practices that can’t be found in the Scriptures! Yes, it’s true! The Bible identifies us as the one who fell away!! WE are the great apostasy!!” (Gary Henson, *The Ivory Domino*, 5991-6131 (Kindle Edition, emphasis added, M.T.); Charleston, AR; Cobb Publishing)

Look at the decision that Gary made.

“During the past two months, the members of the church where Mr. Babbitt attended grew accustomed to seeing me at their 6 PM worship. Today was no different. After all, even though Mr. Babbitt’s lessons and Mr. Young’s sermons revealed far more Bible teachings in six and a half months than I heard in all my life, I wanted to know more. I discovered the instructions from God are not dry and restrictive; they are refreshing and life-enhancing. But this time, keeping my mind in worship proved challenging. Mr. Babbitt’s words proved too forceful a statement to suppress: “You have learned what you must do to be saved; now you have the decision to make.” During the past few months I knew I must follow the truth no matter where it led. The conviction of doing whatever it took to avoid hell and get to heaven still drove me. And now I knew where that truth led. I needed to be baptized as a believing adult in order to get my sins forgiven and get saved. But now that it came time to actually do what that six-month search discovered, several ropes lassoed me and held me back. But the Catholic Church is the oldest, I whimpered. But the oldest what? I shot back. It’s the oldest man-made church. It’s the great apostasy, remember? It is vain and Jesus is going to destroy it when He comes. You want to be a part of that?...Then the scare-word jumped out of the shadows. But I would

be excommunicated! After my senses returned, I thought, So what? I'd just be excommunicated from the apostasy. Actually, I'm getting out of apostasy and into the church! I'm not getting kicked out of the true church Jesus built by the apostles, I'm getting put into it! I'm not losing, I'm gaining! I'm not being lost, I'm being saved!...So, I welcome the excommunication. I will be put out of the enormous multitude that fell away from the real church by its man-made doctrines and practices issued by its man-made councils of its man-made hierarchy—a hierarchy led for hundreds of years by popes steeped in immorality, inquisitions, and crusades! I want out of the ungodly apostasy that horribly misinterprets Matthew 16:18 to mean Peter is the rock, and then lies about a non-existent succession of popes from 600 AD back to Peter and covers it up with forgeries, and then invents the make-believe authority of Tradition to teach those practices that are not taught in the Bible. And then they have the nerve to tell the laity not to read the Bible, but rather just listen to what the clergy tells them. What a racket! If that doesn't wave the red warning flags of error, deception, and cover-up, nothing does! Yeah, they can excommunicate me if they want; it doesn't mean a thing! The quietness of the auditorium grabbed my attention. I raised my vision off of the back of the pew in front of me to see Mr. Young stepping up to the pulpit. From the very start, Roy's sermon sounded like something Mr. Babbitt set him up to preach. But that was okay, I appreciated their efforts to help me. And what he said made a lot of sense. Well, it should, it came from the Bible. One of his points focused upon Matthew 28:19-20. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. He explained the passage teaches, that after being baptized, the new Christian is then to begin to learn and do all Jesus commands in His Word, the New Testament. Roy emphasized the verse's word "all" to mean just that—all, not some. The thought of learning and obeying everything in the New Testament overwhelmed me as an impossible task, but Roy relieved me with other verses which indicate the growth is expected to be a gradual development.<sup>1</sup> Yet, a determined and continual development nonetheless. He also highlighted the important passage of Titus 2:11-14. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Roy pointed out that verse 12 instructs the Christian to stop doing ungodly and sinful things, and instead, live righteously and godly. Of course, the only way to know which is which is to learn the Bible. Then verse 14 tells the Christian he is to be active in good works. Roy mentioned several of the good works taught in the Bible. They fell under two categories; loving God, and loving others.<sup>2</sup> He emphasized that, in loving God, the Christian will gladly obey Hebrews 10:25. Not forsaking the assembling

of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. All of that makes sense. Anybody who truly repents in order to be saved is going to change his ways. I knew that a penitent person would no longer want to do what the Bible says do not do, and he would desire to do what is good and right. And, even if God did not command us to be in the worship assembly, this penitent person would still want to be in the assembly anyway to worship Him instead of being elsewhere worshipping himself—which is exactly what he would be doing if he skipped out to enjoy things of this world. It is not only about becoming saved, it is about becoming a Christian. It is a new mind and a new way of life. Roy's last point, whether intentional or not, hit me right between my ears. Yes, specifically me—someone in a man-made church who is considering the baptism the Bible teaches. He explained, since only those who believe in Jesus, repent of sin, confess Jesus as Lord, and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins are those who are saved and added by God to His church as taught in Acts 2:38, 41, and 47, then everyone who has not done even one of those requirements is not saved nor are they in the church of Jesus. Even large groups of such people—the apostasy and denominations—are lost and outside the Lord's church. So, when a person in a man-made church learns the truth and is baptized correctly, he or she is now a member of the true church and is to worship and work with them. However, if the new Christian goes back to his man-made church made up of non-saved people, his baptism would be for nothing, as Roy pointed out from the Scriptures. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate," saith the Lord. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Ephesians 5:11. So, I summarized in my mind, be baptized to get saved; be added by God to His church with whom I worship and work; continue to learn and obey the Bible; be active in good works; and look forward to eternity in heaven. What a great deal God gives us! However, spiraling up from the depth of my subconscious came the strongest lasso of all. But what about Mom? What about my grandfather and grandmother, and my aunts, uncles, and cousins? I would be betraying them and our ancient family religion! But the more I thought about it, the more I realized the only way I would betray them is if I knew the truth but did not tell them! What if we were all in a house that was on fire? I could stay in there and be destroyed with them, or, having found a way out I could silently escape alone and betray them, or, I could escape and warn the others with what I discovered. The first two choices are unthinkable! In real life, everybody does the third one. How much more, then, ought I do so with their eternity at stake?! If one of them had learned what I have, I would certainly want him to tell me! They are just like me six and a half months ago, completely unaware of the early apostasy and that we are in it today. No! I will not betray them! I will do what the Bible says to do to be saved, and I will tell my family these truths and hope they respond as I am about to. Roy's sermon was coming to a close. Soon he would offer the

opportunity for baptism. Excitement rippled through my chest and shoulders. Thrill whirled up and down my arms and legs. Delightful thoughts flashed within my head. Salvation! I am about to be saved from my sins! Heaven will be mine, not hell! I am quitting the vain and dooming doctrines and practices of men. I am not joining a condemned man-made denomination; rather, God is adding me to the very church Jesus built! I am getting into Jesus' church and out of the apostasy! I quickly recalled how often I viewed myself as a domino at the end of a long train of dominoes standing on end, one behind another with a slight space between. A slight push on the first topples the next, which topples the next, and the next, and the next, until all have imitated what the first one did. It grieved me that people are the same way in religion. But I cannot point my finger at anyone; the domino effect victimized me too. I simply took my turn at doing and believing what the ones before me did. I merely assumed we were right. I did not question anything. Understandably, I just trusted in what those I loved and respected told me, just as they had trusted in those they loved. The tragedy is, those who pushed the first domino of so much of our beliefs and practices were men, not God. Religious dominoes: the malicious, soul-enslaving trap of the devil. The song leader approached the pulpit to lead the church in singing a song during which anyone desiring baptism could let Roy know. I visualized myself as my brothers' ivory domino at the end of their long train of black dominoes. In the distance I saw the dominoes toppling one after another. The point of impact rapidly advanced toward me. I mentally heard the clacking of the plastic pieces. Closer it came. Much closer. Three left. Two. One. But the ivory domino would not fall. I stood as the congregation rose to sing. I glanced back at Mr. Babbitt, but he looked straight ahead. It caused me to remember what he told me, "I am not going to pressure you. I have done all I can. You have learned what you must do to be saved. Now you have the decision to make." Thank you for all you did for me, Mr. Babbitt. I have made my decision. And I stepped into the aisle..." (Gary Henson, *The Ivory Domino*, 7120-7227 (Kindle Edition, emphasis added, M.T.); Charleston, AR; Cobb Publishing)

The churches of Christ stand ready to assist you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.