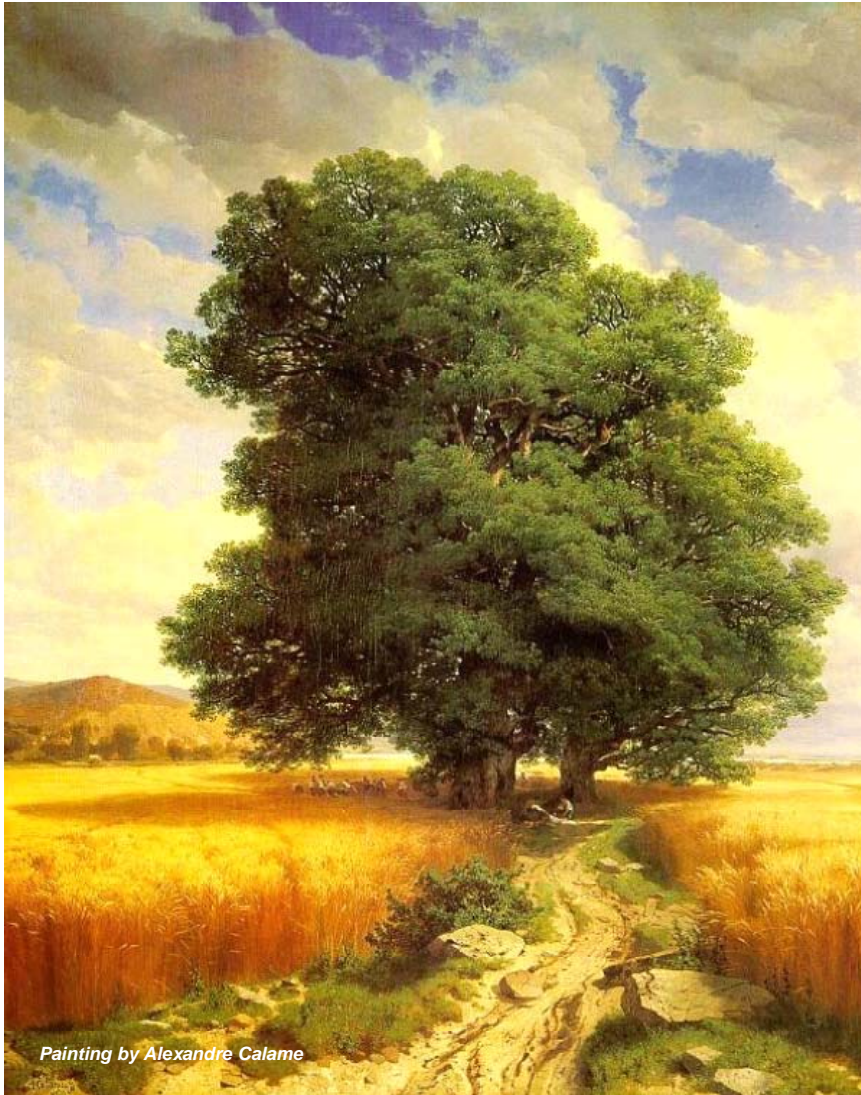


You're of no earthly value unless you're...

# Heavenly Minded

Vol 5 Iss 4



Painting by Alexandre Calame

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## ***In this issue...***

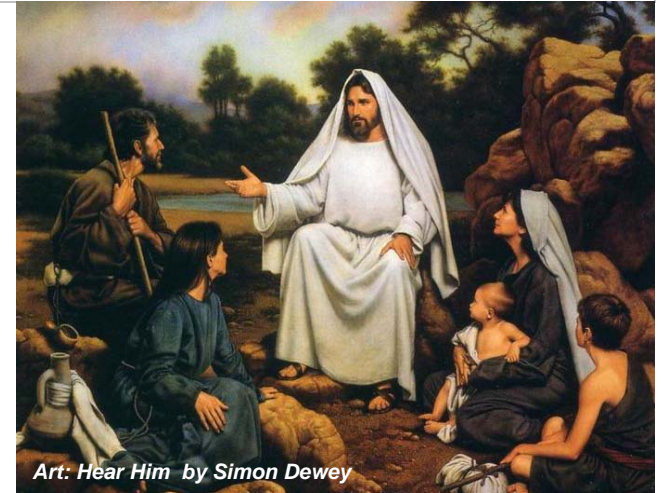
Out on a Limb? The Dragon Lady The Endtime Church

### **Dear Friends,**

"God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realise what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks onto the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right, but what is the good of saying you're on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else-- something it never entered your head to conceive--comes crashing in; something so beautiful to us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love, or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to lie down, when it's become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realize it or not. Now, today, in this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever; we must take it or leave it." (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

*In Christ's Love, John and Darlene Dickey*

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.  
John 15:3,4



Art: Hear Him by Simon Dewey

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## Out on a Limb?

*“Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.”*

*“Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’”* (See John 6)

We are all familiar with this story. Some 5,000 men along with thousands of women and children were approaching Jesus and His band of disciples. At this point, He had already done many marvelous miracles starting with the making of wine out of water. Philip, being one of His earliest followers had likely seen them all and now he was on the spot. Jesus’ question led him to first consider the practical, the logical impossibility of the situation – “where shall we buy bread...?”

*“But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.”*

As we have written before, testing is an important principle of interaction with our Maker. Although God never tempts us with evil desires (see James 1:13, 14), He is very much into testing us at specific times for specific reasons. Yet, if you’re like me, testing in and of itself makes you uncomfortable because in our human experience it implies a pass or fail result.

John wanted to encourage our faith in Christ by recording a number of signs in his gospel. Nevertheless,

it isn’t the sign in this chapter that first grabs our attention but rather what prefaced it – the test. All believers are tested. Even Jesus was tested in all ways (Heb 4:15).

There, on the mountain, Christ knew what He was going to do so His question to Philip wasn’t posed to discover a solution to the situation. The Lord wasn’t befuddled or stressed out by the overwhelming crowd. The dining requirements weren’t the least bit intimidating for Him.

So why the test?

*“Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’”* Philip concluded that it would take an impossible or at least unreasonable sum of money to do what Jesus was implying, and there He stalled. Don’t we often do the same?

Testing goes back to Eden where the choice to heed or rebel against God was placed squarely in the middle of the garden paradise. The first mention, however, of testing is in Genesis 22:

*“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’”*

*“And he said, ‘Here I am.’”*

*“Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’”*

The Greek word for the test pertaining to Philip and the feast is the same one used in Heb 11:17 that points back in time to this passage of Abraham with Isaac.

In other words, the same type of thing was taking place with both men.

Throughout his pilgrimage, Abraham had demonstrated a full spectrum of human interaction with his Maker from:

- obedience in leaving Haran to go to the promised land to
- the disobedience of bringing along Lot to
- the fear of man in Egypt when he portrayed Sarai as his sister rather than his wife to
- the courage and faith to take on five armies to rescue his nephew Lot to
- the carnal ‘helping God out’ by having a son with Sarai’s handmaid Hagar to
- the faith to bargain with God to spare Sodom for just five godly people to
- the bitter grief and discouragement when Sodom was destroyed to
- the abandoning of Sarah to Abimelech soon after God had promised a son through her to
- the obedience of the circumcision to
- the obedience of sending out Hagar and her son Ishmael to
- the test of Genesis 22 which is perhaps the most obvious prophetic picture of what the heavenly Father later did with His Son, Jesus.

It’s clear that God did not pick Abram to leave Ur and later Haran because he was initially full of faith but because He knew the end from the beginning. He knew Abraham. (See Gen 18:19) Christ didn’t pick Philip and the other disciples because from the beginning they were outstanding examples of spirituality. In fact,

Jesus, in answering Philip’s demand that He show them the Father responded, *“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”* Yet Christ knew the end from the beginning. He knew the Philip who would die a martyr’s death for his Lord.

So why the tests?

James tells us that there are various types of tests - James 1:2. Generally, there are two sources and two intended outcomes. God tests our faith. Satan tempts our flesh. The proving of your faith in Christ produces steadfastness and patient enduring – James 1:3. In contrast, the tempting or ‘baiting’ test is not from God – James 1:14. It is intended to lead us astray from the truth into sin – James 1:16

In Eden, we were baited by the serpent with fruit from a tree. This is significant and instructive for both types of testing involve a sort of tasting if you would. You see, throughout scripture, mankind is likened unto trees – usually fruit bearing trees. Israel is typified specifically by the fig, the olive and the grape. The righteous are likened unto fruit bearing palms. (Psa 92:12) Jesus is likened unto an apple tree as well as the trunk of the grape tree. He is also pictured by the Tree of Life as He is the source of life to men. The person who meditates in the Word of God continually is like a tree that prospers near the rivers of water. (Psa 1) The wicked are like a fruitless yet vigorous tree. (Psa 37:35) The faithful remnant of

believers will be called trees of righteousness. (Isa 61:3) Jesus spoke of righteous and evil men as trees (Mat 7:17, 18, 12:33) and even gave a blind man spiritual insight while healing his vision so that he initially did see men as trees (Mark 8:24). Paul likened believers unto wild olive branches grafted into the good olive tree. Jude characterized the false believers unto trees *"whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."* (Jud 1:12)

This tree imagery is important because it is intended to illustrate that God desires fruit from our lives – spiritual fruit. This is for our benefit and for His good pleasure. Jesus referred to our Father as the "husbandman" – the One who tends the vine or tree (John 15:1). Add to this what James recorded, *"Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it..."* (James 5:7) and what Paul wrote, *"The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits."* (2 Tim 2:6) and you begin to get the picture. When He's testing, His purpose is to patiently produce, mature and 'taste' our fruit. Jesus also alluded to this when He gave the parable lessons in Luke 13:6-9 and Mat 21:33 – 41.

I think that's one reason He placed Adam in the Garden of Eden in the first place. Beyond the simple enjoyment of the paradise and the blessing of God's fellowship, Adam was probably meant to learn that as he tended the garden to maturity so God is tending us.

Now, He already knows what kind of tree you are so to speak. He knows all things. And the good news is that in testing us, 'failure is not an option' if you would. You see, He knows you and has promised never to test you to a greater degree than you can handle. (See 1 Cor 10:13). Like Philip, there are probably times you know you've fallen short, but you can be confident, as His child, that God is nonetheless working out His good will in you.

Peter, who, from our perspective, 'failed' the Lord at the very time he claimed that he wouldn't later wrote, *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls."* 1 Pet 1:6-9

Additionally, the Lord may 'taste' the fruit of His work in your heart, but He is ever the initiator, for He first instructs us to taste His 'fruit', the fruit of His Spirit. See Gal 5:22, 23.

*"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;"* Psa 34:8

The psalmist praises, *"How sweet are Your words to my taste,*

*Sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* Psa 119:103

It is written of the Beloved (Jesus) in the Song of Songs, *"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,*

*so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."* Song 2:3

Peter wrote, *"...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious."* 1 Pet 2:2, 3

You see, in tasting the fruit of His Spirit, we experience the planting, watering, pruning, cleaning, fertilizing and weeding of His gentle hands which in turn causes us to bear the same kind of fruit. Love begets love!

Now, when Satan is testing or tempting, he is trying to get us to taste his fruit which simply appeals to the desires of our flesh. In fact, he is known as the "tempter" in scripture and his desire is to destroy us. James wrote, *"...each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."* James 1:14, 15 And Peter wrote, *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."* 1 Pet 2:11

So back to Philip and Abraham. As Jesus showed, God knows what He's going to do ahead of time, all the time. He knows what kind of 'tree' you are. If you're born again, you are "His planting" (Isa 60:21, 61:3). On the mount with Christ, Philip came up short in faith, but Jesus never came down on him for missing the point. On the mount with Christ, the maturity of Abraham's faith was demonstrated and God commended him. On the mount alone, Christ passed the ultimate test of faith in our Father. In all cases, the Lord was glorified.

In testing our faith, God is ever glorified; of that you can be confident. In baiting a sincere believer's flesh, Satan, though at times seemingly successful, is fighting a lost battle - Calvary settled the issue.

You know how you should walk, so walk. And always remember, when you belong to the Lord, no created thing can separate you from His love. As Paul concluded, *"...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,... What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?..."*

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:*

*'For Your sake we are killed all day long;*

*We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."*

*"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:2,3 & 31-39) Hallelujah!

# The Dragon Lady

By Ray C. Stedman

One of the frequent questions asked about the end times is: "Will the church go through the great tribulation?" I am not going to deal at length with that question now, but we have seen in many passages of Scripture, and especially in the seven letters to the churches of Revelation, several reasons to say, "No, the true church of Jesus Christ will not go through the great tribulation." Those who truly know the Lord and who are alive when this period comes, will be caught up to be with him before the tribulation begins.

Yet all the church today is not necessarily included in that promise. All of Christendom is not the true church, in other words. There is a church that goes through the great tribulation, and we come to that matter in our studies in Revelation now. We had a hint of this in the letter to Thyatira in the 2nd chapter of this book, where the Lord describes a woman there named Jezebel who taught the people to commit immorality, and of whom the Lord said, "I will cast her and her children into great tribulation," (Revelation 2:22 KJV). We get the full account of that here in Chapters 17 and 18. It is introduced in the first six verses of Chapter 17:

**One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman**

**sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead:**

**MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

**I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.** (Revelation 17:1-5 NIV)

We have already learned that the beast represents a western coalition of nations, headed by a great political leader who will dominate world economics in the last days. (We will see more of this beast later in this chapter). But now the apostle is called to focus on this woman who sat upon the beast. There are several clues, in fact ten of them, which are given to help us identify the woman. What does this symbol mean? Two full chapters are devoted to this. No symbol in the book of Revelation is given more identifying marks than this woman, therefore she must represent a very important factor. Here are the clues: First, we are told that this woman is a "prostitute." She is a harlot, or, to put it bluntly, a whore. The use of a sexual symbol indicates that physical wrongdoing, which is bad in itself in the sight of God, is a picture of an even greater evil, that is, worship of God gone wrong! It pictures unfaithfulness to God by someone who claims to honor him. A harlot is one who offers sexual satisfaction, as a wife would, but does not otherwise fulfill that role. This clue

points to some organization or group that claims to worship God but is actually unfaithful to him. The second clue given is that this woman has universal influence. She is described as "the great prostitute, who sits on many waters." We do not have to guess what that means for in Verse 15 of this same chapter John says,

**Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages."** (Revelation 17:15 NIV)

Many peoples all over the earth are affected by the teachings of this harlot organization. In Verses 1 and 2 we read, "With her the kings of the earth committed adultery." She will have power over the leaders of nations -- "the kings of the earth" -- and she makes the common people "intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." In other words, they are misled by the heady wine of religious illusion which results from the teaching of the woman. The third clue is that she is seated upon the beast. That pictures a relationship between them. It is clear that the woman dominates the beast for a period of time. She exercises tremendous power over the political leader of these last days, but eventually Verses 16 and 17 will be fulfilled.

**"The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled."** (Revelation 17:15-17 NIV)

All through these sections, we see constant reminders that God is in overall control. He allows things to happen, and they will actually accomplish his ultimate purposes. The fourth clue is that the woman is obviously very wealthy and expensively adorned. She was "dressed

in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls." These are symbols, figures of divine and spiritual truths, but which are only outwardly held. They are not actually possessed, but outwardly adorn, thus making the woman very attractive to many people. She also holds, we are told as the fifth clue, "a golden cup in her hand." Outwardly it is of gold, which is a symbol of divine activity -- it looks to be divinely given -- but it is filled with false religious concepts, "with abominable things," with spiritual adulteries, filthiness of teaching. As many commentators point out, this is intended to be a contrast with the communion cup of the New Testament, "the cup of the Lord," which is associated with the truth of God. This is a counterfeit of the cup of the Lord. It looks like it is the true thing but is not.

Then the sixth clue is given: she is called "Mystery, Babylon the Great." The word "Mystery" indicates there is something deeper here than appears on the surface. Babylon, of course, was the great city on the Euphrates River, the empire which dominated the ancient world. We see the founding of this city in the book of Genesis. It was begun as the city of Babel, founded by Nimrod, the great hunter of human souls. It became a source of idolatry for all of the ancient world. But this is not a reference to Babylon by the Euphrates because the title "Mystery" indicates something deeper. It is that which is spiritually identified with Babylon, i.e., with idolatry or spiritual adultery. Similarly, in Verse 8 of Chapter 11 we were told that Jerusalem is called "Sodom" and "Egypt" because it had become a source of wrongful teaching and corrupt practice.



The seventh clue is that she is called "The mother of prostitutes." Other religious organizations and groups follow the same errors and fall into the same idolatries and false religious teachings. She spreads wide the seeds of false doctrine throughout the world, and many groups will follow her. Then, the eighth clue is that she is a persecutor of the true believers in Christ: "I saw the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus." She cannot tolerate any opposition that reveals the falsehood she is perpetrating. She opposes with violence and death all those who preach the truth contrary to the lie she promulgates. Two other clues appear elsewhere in this chapter which we will consider along with these to be sure we have properly identified this woman. One is found in Verse 9, and the other in Verse 18, the last verse of the chapter. These add further confirmation to the woman's identity. Verse 9:

**"This calls for a mind with wisdom** [i.e. it is not something easily identifiable. One must think about it.]. **The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.**" (Revelation 17:9 NIV)

17:18 NIV)

In John's day that could only be one city -- Rome. "The great city," which was the capital of the Roman Empire that dominated the whole known world of that day, literally ruled over the kings of the earth. But at that time the church in Rome was not a counterfeit church; it was a genuine Christian assembly. At the end of the 1st century when John is writing this, it was the church of the catacombs. It was persecuted and hounded and had to hide in the caves of the earth underneath the city. That probably explains the last part of Verse 6 where John tells us that when he saw the woman seated upon the beast, "I was greatly astonished." Why? Doubtless it is a great surprise to him to see that the church he knew in Rome would become a great harlot church, dominating the kings of the earth.

When we put all these clues together it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that this pictures the Roman Catholic Church. It is a church that arises during the present church age, but comes to its greatest power in the last seven years of this age, after the true church has been raptured. When we say that, we must

More than dozen ancient writers describe Rome as the city built on seven hills. This was familiar terminology in the 1st century. And that identification is further confirmed by what John is told in Verse 18:

**"The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."** (Revelation

remember that we are not talking about Roman Catholic people. We think of the church as people, but the Roman church itself teaches that the church is the clergy -- not the people. It is interesting that Catholic scholars themselves admit as they study this section of Revelation that it is Rome which is described here, but they say it is pagan Rome. The only problem with that is that John would not have been a bit surprised that pagan Rome persecuted the saints of God. He expected that for this was common by his time. But to see the church itself persecuting the saints of God is what astonished him so.

It would be simplistic to say this describes the Roman Catholic Church and that church alone. We must remember, first of all, that there are many true saints within the Roman Catholic Church. There have been godly popes, bishops, priests and nuns through the centuries. I have met some of them; so, perhaps, have you. What we need to understand is that it is the teaching of the Roman church that is described here -- the extra-biblical teachings from pagan sources that have been brought in under the name of Christendom. They involve a seeking of earthly power or status gained by religious authority. That is Babylonianism. That is what first arose in the city by the Euphrates -- a search for earthly power and glory by religious means. The Tower of Babel was built unto heaven, and the people said, "We will make a name for ourselves." That is Babylonianism.

There are many religious groups and churches today that are afflicted by this taint. Not only the Roman Catholic Church, but also Orthodox churches, Anglican churches, Eastern churches, Western churches, Protestant churches, Independent churches, Charismatic

churches, and Evangelical churches -- many of them reflect this same error. Our good friend, Eugene Petererson, who has such a gift for putting things powerfully, says it well:

*Whoredom is sex connected with money. Worship under the aspect of the Great Whore is the commercialization of our great need and deep desire for meaning, love and salvation. The promise of success, ecstasy and meaning that we can get for a price is Whore-worship. It is the diabolical inversion of "You are bought with a price," to, "I can get it for you wholesale."*

Verses 8 through 14 are given to an interpretation of the beast. I will not read them because we already covered this in Chapter 13. There we saw that it describes a revived form of the Roman Empire: ten European nations who give their power to one man to rule. The startling fact that I promised you when we came to this section is that the Imperial form, the emperors or Caesars of Rome, did not pass away until 1917 (the year of my birth) when the German Kaiser and the Russian Czar were both overthrown in one year. Each of these titles are ways of spelling Caesar: Kaiser is the German form; Czar is the Russian. So the imperial form, which is described in this section as the sixth form of the beast, passed away only as late as 1917. A seventh would appear for only a short time, John is told, and then the eighth, which is the beast, will come into being. The end of that eighth form is described in verses 13-14:

**"They have one purpose** [i.e., the ten kingdoms, the ten nations] **and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings -- and**

**with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." (Revelation 17:13-14 NIV)**

When the Lamb appears, the church will be with him. Several Scriptures predict that when Jesus appears in power and great glory, the church is already with him, for, as it says here, accompanying him will be "his called, chosen and faithful followers." That is a brief anticipation of what we come to in Chapter 19, which we will look at next week.

Chapter 18 now adds further details of the judgment of the great whore. It is self-explanatory,

needing little interpretation. I shall merely read it and make a few comments as we go along: First, a great angel announces the fall of Babylon and gives reasons for it:

**After this [John says] I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.**

**With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!**

**She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.**

**For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries.**

**The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth**

**grew rich from her excessive luxuries." (Revelation 18:1-3 NIV)**

Three reasons are given for the overthrow of the great harlot. She is demonic: "She has become the haunt of every evil spirit and every unclean and detestable bird." That is doubtless a reference to our Lord's parable of the mustard seed, found in Matthew 13. There he speaks of this tiny seed, which is the church planted in the



world, which grows to be a great tree and becomes a nesting place for evil birds. It pictures demonic ideas and teachings finding a place in the church. Also Mystery Babylon is said to be, as we have seen before, spiritually unfaithful (kings commit adultery with her) and materially

seductive (merchants grow rich from her excessive luxuries), and for these reasons she is overthrown. Then, in Verses 4-5, an appeal is made to the true saints that are still within this false church in the last days to come out of her.

**Then I heard another voice from heaven say:**

**"Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins,**

**so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven,**

**and God has remembered her crimes." (Revelation 18:4-5 NIV)**

This great religious system still retains much saving truth. One can become a true believer in the church though much error is found as well. There is enough truth there that, by the Spirit of God, someone can become saved, and some do even in

that day. But now the appeal is made to come out of her, and further reasons are given for judgment:

**"Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done.**

**Mix her a double portion from her own cup." (Revelation 18:6 NIV)**

This is simply the law of retribution. What you do to others will come back to you. "What goes around comes around." In this case it is doubled because of the length of time that error is promulgated. Another reason is given in Verses 7 and 8:

**"Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself.**

**In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'**

**Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her:**

**death, mourning and famine.**

**She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her." (Revelation 18:7-8 NIV)**

The second reason for judgment is her arrogant, self-indulgent pride. She lavishes luxuries upon herself and takes pride in the fact that she is a queen; she does not need help from anyone. There is something we must notice carefully here. We saw in Chapter 17 that the beast and the false prophet will turn against her and destroy her with fire. But beyond that hatred and destruction of the beast there seems to be a further judgment from God which is described in Verses 9-10:

**"When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:**

**'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power!**

**In one hour your doom has come!'" (Revelation 18:9-10 NIV)**

There seems to be a sudden judgment from God at the end here. In Chapter 16, this was announced as coming at the time of the great earthquake described there. The kings who destroyed her are now terrified at a sudden and total end that comes to this great city. They are mourning, of course, as the account goes on to tell us, not for the Whore but for their own loss.

**"The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more -- cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep, horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men." (Revelation 18:11-13 NIV)**

Their business is ruined by the destruction of this city. False religion has been good for business, but now it is all gone. It included costly ornaments, fine clothes, ornate building materials, expensive perfumes, incense, fine foods, expensive vehicles, and even slaves - fine young men and women who are bound to serve without pay and who give up every human right and liberty out of mistaken devotion to a false system. Verses 14-19 continues the lament of the peoples of earth:

**"They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from**

**her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out:**

**'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!  
In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!'**

**"Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:**

**'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!'" (Revelation 18:14-19 NIV)**

The merchants and seamen seem terrified and amazed at this sudden judgment that comes upon this great city. Notice how many times "one hour" is mentioned. This destruction is very rapid. It seems to be a judgment by fire from God. It suggests enormous volcanic activity. Geologists have long known that almost all of southern Italy, from Rome down through the city of Naples, is volcanic in nature. Vesuvius, the great volcano behind Naples, has destroyed parts of that city in times past. So there may well be a tremendous volcanic destruction of Rome in the final days of Daniel's 70th week. Now, in contrast to the reaction on earth, heaven rejoices. Verse 20:

**"Rejoice over her, O heaven!  
Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets!  
God has judged her for the way**

**she treated you.'" (Revelation 18:20 NIV)**

Note that the cruel treatment by Mystery Babylon goes back to the time of the apostles. Religious error has come in that has created opposition to the truth, and unleashed attack upon prophets and apostles and the saints of God.

**Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said:**

**"With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.**

**The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again.**

**The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again.**

**The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men.**

**By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.**

**In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth." (Revelation 18:21-24 NIV)**

We do not need to add anything to the solemnness of that final word. But we must not stop there. There are five more verses from Chapter 19 that belong with this:

**After this [John says] I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:**

**"Hallelujah!  
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,  
for true and just are his**

**judgments.**

**He has condemned the great prostitute**

**who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.**

**He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."**

**And again they shouted:**

**"Hallelujah!**

**The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."**

**The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:**

**"Amen, Hallelujah!"**

**Then a voice came from the throne, saying:**

**"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" (Revelation 19:1-5 NIV)**

This is the first time the word "Hallelujah" appears in Revelation. There is a great Hallelujah Chorus in heaven that rejoices over the final removal of this terribly destructive church that insinuates error into the midst of truth and, in the name of God, leads people astray. Verse 3 confirms that the final judgment of Babylon is from God for it says, "The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." That is not an earthly scene; it is eternity that is in view.

Let us now leave that solemn and sobering picture. The quarrel God has with Babylonianism wherever it may be found, not only in the Roman church but in many churches which fall prey to this error, is that "she glorifies herself" in the name of God. She teaches in the name of Christ, mingling truth with error. Saints are called to separate themselves from that root error: the hunger for earthly glory and position obtained by religious devotion. Whenever a church seeks influence by

impressing people with outward splendor you have the seeds of Babylonianism present. Whenever individual Christians try to appear pious and devout while the heart runs after material gain or status, there is the silken allurement of Babylon. In the New Testament the occasion where this begins in the church is the judgment that came upon Ananias and Sapphira. That couple seemed to be godly and devout, but what they were after was not the glory of God but self-glory. They were using an apparent act of devotion on their part in selling their land and giving only a part of the proceeds to the apostles to gain a false status in the midst of the people.

We must ask ourselves, "Why does God show us all this?" All through Revelation we are seeing the end of things that are present with us now. We are shown this because, if we see how things will end we can turn away from them now. That is the reason this book is sent to the seven churches of Asia -- that they might learn from the judgments God will bring on Babylon what is wrong with the practices they see around them throughout the church age.

*Prayer*

Father, how grateful we are for the wisdom of your Word. We remember that wisdom invites us to come and drink of her wine and we will be blessed, strengthened and helped. We pray therefore that we may choose not to drink from the false wine of religious error but to come and drink from the fountain of truth itself, the word of the living God, and be drawn close to the One who loves us and gave himself for us that we may be changed, sanctified, and made whole. In the name of Jesus we ask it. Amen.

## ***The End Times Church: Of Popes, False Prophets And The Anti-Christ (exerpts)***

*By Bill Wilson, KIN senior correspondent*

WASH—Apr 6—KIN—The media coverage of the death of Pope John Paul II will be seen on television by over two billion people, nearly 1/3 of the world's population, positioning the deceptive doctrine of the Catholic Church as true "Christianity" and ushering in the end-time church that may well give rise to the anti-Christ and the false prophet as prophesied in the Bible.

By virtue of the false doctrine of the Catholic Church and its promotion as "the" Christian Church, the next pope shall sit in the seat of a false prophet and may be uniquely positioned to become either the false prophet or the anti-Christ as the world enters into the end-times. For example, the basic tenet of Christianity is salvation by grace through Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Doctrine does not deny salvation through Christ, but promotes other ways to salvation such as prayers through the Virgin Mary, mother of the Christ, and by absolution of sins by priests. The Catholic Catechism, which is the doctrine and statement of faith of the Catholic Church, states that "Only priests who have received the faculty of absolving from the authority of the Church can forgive sins in the name of Christ." And Mary, the mother of Christ, is the "the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."

"Roman Catholic dogma is at great odds with the Scripture. And it does not take a Priest to see it. The Bible's central teachings are simple and clear," said Hal Lindsey, Christian author and commentator. "I know that many Catholics have come to true faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, in spite

of the teaching of their Church. But let us never lose sight of the fact that there is great error in the central dogma of the Church...An error powerful enough to blind someone to the simplicity of simple faith in Christ as our only atonement for sin."

The Roman Catholic doctrine promoting many ways to heaven with Christ being one of them plays well with other religions such as Unitarians, Buddhists, Hindus, and even some of the more liberal Christian denominations. Islam and Judaism would believe in one God, but neither believes that Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life. And the Catholic Church under Pope John Paul II has made great inroads in promoting ecumenicalism between the various religions, especially Islam.

In January 2002, John Paul II hosted a worldwide Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi, Italy where testimonies were offered by representatives from the Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Communion, the Churches originated by the Reformation, Hinduism, the traditional African religions, Buddhism, Hebraism and the Islamic world. Prior to this, a similar meeting occurred at Assisi in 1986, in which 160 representatives of the world's religions were gathered at the behest of the Vatican. Lesser known but similar events occurred at Kyoto in 1987; Rome in 1988; Warsaw in 1989; Bari in 1990; Malta in 1991.

The Pope is called the Vicar of Christ. Vicar is defined as "one serving as a substitute." Jesus said in Matthew 24:5, "For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." The Catholic Church, its doctrine, its Pope and its politics certainly bear a watchful eye as the world marches toward the end-times.



*Let the field be joyful, and all that [is] therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Psa 96:12*