

THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME EXCEPT.....

By: Bro. Martin Eldon Bledsoe

2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 ... be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

In about 60 AD the Apostle Paul wrote these words to assure the Church of the Thessalonians that the Second Coming of Christ was yet in the distant future. Was Paul correct? Of course he was. Here we are almost two-thousand years later and Christ still hasn't come.

How did Paul know? Paul knew that Christ's coming would be greatly in the future because the Scriptures foretold three major events that had to take place before Christ could return to earth. What are these three things? First, the Roman Empire had to collapse. Second, there had to be a great falling away of the Church from the truth and finally the 'Man of Sin' had to be revealed. All of these things were prophesied to happen by the prophets of old to take place before Christ would return to the earth for his Church, and Paul knew this.

You see the Apostles and the early Church had a very different understanding of prophecy than many of the Churches of today have. The early Church believed in what is called the historic interpretation or view of prophecy.

WHAT IS THE HISTORIC VIEW OF PROPHECY?

Before the 1800's almost all Protestant Churches believed and taught the Historic View of Prophecy, in fact the Historic view was held by the Christian Church from the very beginning. You

may be asking: What is the Historic View of Prophecy? The Historic View of prophecy teaches that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are being unfolded throughout all of history, that many portions of these Scriptures have already been fulfilled, some are being fulfilled, and others are yet to be fulfilled. The student of the Bible who holds to the Historic view can actually look back over the past two-thousand years and pinpoint in history where certain prophecies have come to pass.

You may ask: How is this different from other views of prophecy? Since the 1800's there have been two new views of prophecy circulated among the Churches. One is futurism, which teaches that all prophecies that were not fulfilled before the ascension of Christ, will be fulfilled after the rapture of the Church during the final seven years of earth's history. The preachers of Futurism thus teach that there is a 2000 year 'gap' in time that was completely hidden from the prophets.

The other view of prophecy is Preterism. It teaches that all the prophecies of the Bible, including the second coming of Christ and the resurrection were all fulfilled by 70 AD. Both of these doctrines take away all meaning of prophecy from the Church by removing the Church from the realm of the prophecies.

Let me ask you dear reader: Have you ever heard a Minister read from the Book of Revelation and then say: "*Don't worry Church, this isn't you, we'll be in heaven*"? What is he actually saying? He is saying that the study of Revelation is unprofitable for the believer. You see, if all the prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled, or if no prophecy of the Bible will be fulfilled until we are 'in heaven', what profit would these prophecies be to the Christian? None! If either of these things is true, then the prophecies of the Bible have NO real usefulness for me and for you. But let me assure you that the gift of prophecy is given to profit ALL. The prophetic Scriptures are

given for your benefit and the early Church used them repeatedly!

For instance the early Church fled Jerusalem before 70AD when they saw the Roman Armies surrounding it, because they knew from prophecy that the desolation of that city was coming. Thousands and thousands of Jews were killed in the slaughter, but not a single Christian lost his life because they took heed to the prophetic Scriptures. Also, the Church of the first four centuries prayed for the stability of the Roman Empire and the continuance of Caesar because they knew from their study of Scriptures that one day Rome would be divided, and great darkness would cover the land. In 476 AD the Roman Empire was divided, and shortly after great spiritual darkness filled the land, just as the Scriptures predicted.

You see by studying history along with these prophetic books the Church can actually be encouraged in seeing where specific prophecies have been fulfilled, and they can obtain a reasonable understanding of what lies shortly in the future. The Historic View of Prophecy keeps the Prophetic Scriptures in the forefront of the Christian's mind; while Preterism and Futurism do just the opposite.

In the following pages of this booklet we will explain from the historic prospective the prophecies that Paul had in mind when he wrote 2nd Thessalonians Chapter Two and I am certain the reader will be amazed when he sees from the pages of history the very fulfillment of these prophecies.

HE WHO NOW LETTETH

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth

[restrains] will let [restrain], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Here Paul explained that there was something [a what], who was also a someone [a he], who was hindering the appearance of the Antichrist; but he explained that when this restraining entity was removed then the Wicked one would be revealed.

Let's first consider the futurist interpretation of these verses. The futurist, who teaches a pre-tribulation rapture, tells us that the restraining entity is the Holy Ghost, and that when the Holy Ghost is taken away at the rapture of the Church, then the Anti-Christ would be revealed, setting in motion the other prophecies of the Bible. Thus they make this prophecy void of any real meaning to the Christian.

But is this a Biblical interpretation? Absolutely not. Why? First of all, because it completely contradicts verse three of this chapter, which tells us that Christ will not come and the Church will not be gathered until after "The Man of Sin is revealed". Secondly, if Paul was meaning the Holy Spirit, he would have had said so. Thirdly, by telling the Thessalonians "you know what withholdeth", and then using improper pronouns to refer to it, it is clear that it was something that the apostle thought not safe openly to declare in his writing.

When a proper exegesis is performed upon these verses, it becomes plain that Paul was referring to a power with civil authority that was headed up by a man, which he knew was hindering the rise of the Anti-Christ. What entity was it? What was Paul referring to? What had to be taken away before the man of sin could come to power? We will let the Church from the earliest times answer:

Tertullian, who lived from 155 AD until 222 AD wrote:

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hinders must hinder, until he be taken out of the way.” What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)? “ – *Tertullian On the Resurrection of the Flesh* chapter 24

Cyril of Jerusalem (315–386): “But this aforesaid Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman empire shall have been fulfilled...” First Catechetical Lecture part 15.

Jerome (347–420): "Says the apostle [Paul in the second epistle to the Thessalonians], ‘Unless the Roman Empire should first be desolated, and antichrist proceed, Christ will not come.’"

John Chrysostom [347-407 AD] “What then is it that withholdeth, that is, hindereth him from being revealed? Some indeed say, the grace of the Spirit, but others the Roman empire, to whom I most of all accede. Wherefore? Because if he meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly... But because he said this of the Roman empire, he naturally glanced at it, and speaks covertly and darkly.” – Homily IV. 2 Thess ii. 6-9.

This interpretation was held throughout Church history and by the majority of the Great Reformers as seen from the following commentary found in the Geneva Bible of 1599.

Geneva Bible (1599) “He who is now in authority and rules all, that is the Roman Empire [but] when the empire of Rome is taken away, the seat that falls away from God [Anti-christ] will succeed and hold its place, as the old writers, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Jerome explain and interpret it.”

Also many of the most recognized Bible Commentaries agree that Paul was indeed speaking of the Roman Empire. For

instance:

“Antichrist, was thus kept in check by the Roman emperor”
– Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown

“but by that which withheld, let or hindered the open appearance of antichrist, were the Roman empire and emperors” – John Gill’s Expositor.

“the Roman emperor and empire as most probably meant here by the apostle; and therefore he wrote not plainly, lest by writing of the taking away that empire, which the Romans thought to be eternal, he might stir up their hatred against the Christians.” – Matthew Poole’s Commentary.

“The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to [the] civil power [of Rome], meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed.” – Barnes New Testament Notes.

“this development [revealing of anti-christ] could not take place until pagan imperial Rome fell. We know that it did withhold, or prevent it.” – People’s New Testament Notes

As you can see dear reader the Doctrine of Futurism and a pre-tribulation rapture make these important prophecies meaningless and unprovable! Where as the Historic View keeps these prophecies in the focus of the Church and actually proves the Inspiration of Scriptures. I am certain that the reader will be amazed at the accuracy of Bible Prophecy once it is considered from the historical view of the Church. So if you will, open your Bible with me and we will discover history through the pages of Divinely Inspired Scriptures.

The Book of Daniel And the Fall of the Roman Empire.

The question is: Why did the early historic Church all believe

that the Roman Empire must first collapse before the Man of Sin could come to power? It is because of their knowledge and in-depth study of the Book of Daniel. The Book of Daniel was written about 550 BC, and in it the Man of Sin was clearly foretold, but according to Daniel he could only arise from one place, the smoking ruins of the divided Roman Empire. And thus Paul rightly taught the Thessalonians that as long as the Empire was united under Caesar the man of sin could not be revealed, for the Scriptures cannot be broken or in other words: What was prophesied beforehand must come to pass. Let's consider the following chapter of Daniel.

The World Empires Set In Order – Daniel Chapter Two

As we begin to read chapter two of Daniel, we find that God had given King Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty King of Babylon a dream. This dream troubled his very soul, but he could not remember the contents of it. After calling for the astrologers, magicians and sorcerers, he commanded them to make known the dream, and then interpret it. The pagans answered, *"There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler that asked, such things at any magician, or astrologer or chaldean"*. Because of their answer the king ordered that all the wise men of his kingdom be destroyed. When Daniel, the young Hebrew captive, heard of the matter, he asked for time so that he could seek the God of Israel for the answer. Shortly afterward Daniel appeared before the king, and made known the dream and the interpretation of it. Amazingly the dream sets forth the course of the whole world, from the time of Daniel until the Second Advent of Christ. The following is the dream as told by the prophet Daniel:

“Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This images head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs part iron, his feet part of iron and part clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together,

and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” **Daniel 2:31-35**

Daniel’s Interpretation of the Dream.

Daniel then explained to Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream [Daniel 2:37-43]; saying: The head of gold represented the ruler of Babylon. The breast of silver is another kingdom that would come after Babylon. What Kingdom came after Babylon? We know that Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC and is actually named in Daniel 8:20. Daniel then explained to the king that the belly of brass represents the third kingdom. Which Kingdom came after Medo-Persia? We know from history that Greece under the leadership of Alexander the Great conquered Persia around 330 B.C.. Amazingly the Empire of Greece is named in Daniel 8:21, which was written two hundred years before Greece conquered Persia!.

Daniel then interprets the iron to represent the fourth kingdom, which would rise after Greece. We know that Rome is this fourth kingdom (Luke 2:1). Rome became the prominent Empire over Greece (which was divided into four dynasties at the time) around 180 B.C. and then Rome captured Palestine in 63 B.C., ending Greece’s (Syrian) rule in Palestine.

Yet Daniel predicted the following would happen to this Roman Empire:

“And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided” Daniel 2:41.

Was the Roman Empire divided? Yes. The Roman Empire fell and was divided into ten nations in 476 AD, one thousand years after Daniel had written this prophecy.. History tells us that Romulus Augustulus, who was the last Emperor of the west, was sent into exile by the German Odoacer in 476 AD, thus ending the Western Roman Empire. .

Daniel then finishes his interpretation by foretelling the Coming of Christ:

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed... and it shall stand forever."

Thus according to Daniel, Christ would come to reign on this earth after the Roman Empire was divided. This is the historic interpretation of this chapter which has been held by the Church since the days of the Apostles. This can be seen by the following explanation of Daniel chapter two as given by Bishop Hippolytus [170-236 AD] who lived two hundred and fifty years before the Roman Empire fell.

"Behold a great image." How, then, should we not mark the things prophesied of old in Babylon by Daniel, and now yet in the course of fulfillment in the world? For the image shown at that time to Nebuchadnezzar furnished a type of the whole world. In these times the Babylonians were sovereign over all, and these were the golden head of the image. And then, after them, the Persians held the supremacy for 245 years, and they were represented by the silver. Then the Greeks had the supremacy, beginning with Alexander of Macedon, for 300 years, so that they were the brass. After them came the Romans, who were the iron legs of the image, for they were strong as iron. Then (we have) the toes of clay and iron, to signify the democracies that were subsequently to rise, partitioned among the ten toes of the image, in which shall be iron mixed with clay." – Hippolytus Exegetical On Daniel 2

This is one of the reasons Paul told the Thessalonians: Don't be "soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." He knew that as long as the Roman Empire remained united under Caesar Christ would not come, for the Scriptures cannot be broken.

"EXCEPT THE MAN OF SIN BE REVEALED"

Now we ask the question: What prophecy does Paul have in mind when he adds:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" - 2nd Thessalonians 2:3?

Again he has the Book of Daniel in mind, specifically Daniel Chapter Seven which foretells the rise of the man of sin. With these words of Paul in mind let us consider the Seventh Chapter of Daniel.

Daniel Chapter Seven – The Little Horn of Antichrist

In the first year of Belshazzar, the final king of Babylon; God gave Daniel a vision of four great beasts. What is this vision about? This vision, like the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:31-45), deals with the four world empires of human history. In fact, Daniel is told clearly what the four beasts represent.

Daniel 7:17 "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings (kingdoms), which shall arise out of the earth."

With this vision, God takes the basis of Daniel chapter two, and he adds many more details. God is like an artist, he gave us an sketchy outline of world history in Chapter two, and now he is going to take his brush and fill the outline with color and detail. With that in mind we will now quickly identify each beast and we will see that the beasts correspond to the four metals of the vision in Daniel chapter two.

The Winged Lion of Babylon.

Daniel 7:4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

This first beast is Babylon. The winged lion is an ancient symbol of Babylon and even King Nebuchadnezzar was called an lion by God in Jeremiah 4:7. It was King Nebuchadnezzar who was lifted up in pride, until God removed his understanding, and "Let his heart be changed from man's and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him." Daniel 4:16. After the seven years of living like a beast of the field (Daniel 4:33) his understanding returned, along with a humbled heart of man. Nebuchadnezzar was then willing to give honor to GOD.

The Bear of Medo-Persia

Daniel 7:5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

The second beast is the united kingdom of Medo-Persia. This Kingdom is named in Daniel 8:20. One side of the bear being higher than the other represents the Medes being more prominent of the two. There was actually found in the city of

Babylon a figure of a bear with one foot raised which represented this empire. The three ribs represent the three conquests of the of Medo-Persia, which were: Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.

The Leopard of Greece

Daniel 7:6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

The leopard symbolizes Greece, whose army was deadly swift, and quickly conquered the known world. Amazingly, this Kingdom is named in Daniel 8:21. The four heads of the beast represents the division of the kingdom after the death of Alexander the Great. When Alexander died the kingdom of Greece was given to his four generals; Ptolemy took Egypt, Seleucus took Syria, Lysimachus chose Asia Minor and Cassander took Greece [As explained in Daniel 8:8, 22].

The Great Dragon of Rome.

Daniel 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

The fourth beast is the Roman Empire who ruled with an iron fist. It has been called by historians the 'Iron Kingdom'. It is described as a seven headed dragon in Revelation 13. It was the Roman Empire that conquered Greece and absorbed the territories of these other Kingdoms. Rome conquered Palestine in 63 B.C. and continued as a united kingdom for five-hundred years. The Roman Empire was not conquered, but rather it fell apart from within during its incorporation with the Germanic and Slavonic tribes. The ten horns represents the ten nations that would rise out of the divided Roman Empire. According to prophecy a horn represents a king [Daniel 7:24, 8:21].

The Little Horn of Antichrist.

Daniel 7:8, 21-22 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a

mouth speaking great things... I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came...

According to these Scriptures an evil king [a horn represents a king-Daniel 7:24] over a very small nation would rise in the midst of the divided Roman empire. During his rise to power he would cause three of the first 'horns' [divisions of Rome] to be plucked up by the roots. This king would also be a religious figure because the symbols of 'eyes' and a 'mouth' represent a Seer or a prophet [*1st Samuel 9:9, Isaiah 30:10, Jeremiah 1:9, 15:9, Exodus 4:16, Zechariah 8:9*]. He would also be a persecuting, blasphemous power, and he would prevail against the saints until the coming of Christ. This little horn is the 'Man of Sin' that Paul spoke about, he is the one the Church calls "antichrist". And as you see according to Scriptures he will not only be revealed before Christ comes, but he will be devastating the Church also. This is why Paul taught that the 'Man of Sin' had to be revealed before Christ could come. He had studied this Chapter of prophecy and he knew the Scriptures could not be broken. This is the historic interpretation of the prophecy as seen in the following quotes:

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Irenaeus [120-202AD]: "Daniel having respect to the end of the last kingdom; that is the last ten kings among whom their kingdom should be divided, upon whom the son of perdition shall come; he says that ten horns shall be upon the beast, and another little horn should rise up in the midst of them; and three horns of the first be rooted out before him; and, "behold", saith he, "in this horn were eyes as the eyes of man", of whom again the Apostle Paul, in 2Th 2:8 declaring together the cause of his coming, thus says, "and then shall that wicked one be revealed."... and he shall sit in the temple of God, leading astray those who worship him, as if he were Christ." Irenaeus: Advers. Haeress, l. 5. c. 25.

Hippolytus [170-236AD] "As these things, then, are in the future, and as the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies, and the ten horns of the fourth beast are distributed over ten kingdoms, let us look at the subject a little more closely, and consider these matters as in the clear light of a personal survey. The golden head of the image and the lioness denoted the Babylonians; the shoulders and arms

of silver, and the bear, represented the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass, and the leopard, meant the Greeks, who held the sovereignty from Alexander's time; the legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of the kingdoms that are yet to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst; the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ." – Hippolytus Treatise on Christ and AntiChrist.

"And it [the fourth beast]had ten horns." For as the prophet said already of the leopard, that the beast had four heads, and that was fulfilled, and Alexander's kingdom was divided into four principalities, so also now we ought to look for the ten horns which are to spring from [the Roman Empire], when the time of the beast shall be fulfilled, and the little horn, which is Antichrist, shall appear suddenly in their midst" – Hippolytus Exegetical On Daniel 7

St. Cyril of Jerusalem [315-386 AD] "There shall rise up together ten kings of the Romans, reigning in different parts perhaps, but all about the same time; and after these an eleventh, the Antichrist, who by his magical craft shall seize upon the Roman power; and of the kings who reigned before him, three he shall humble, and the remaining seven he shall keep in subjection to himself." Lecture XV

Jerome [340-420 AD] "We should therefore concur with the traditional interpretation of all the commentators of the Christian Church, that at the end of the world, when the Roman Empire is to be destroyed, there shall be ten kings who will partition the Roman world amongst themselves. Then an insignificant eleventh king will arise, who will overcome three of the ten kings" Commentary on Daniel, Chapter 7, Verse 8

J. Zanchius the historian writes: "all ecclesiastical writers [agree], that when the Roman empire is destroyed, there shall be ten kings who shall divide it among them; and an eleventh shall arise, a little king, who shall conquer three of the ten kings; and having slain them, the other seven shall submit

their necks to the conqueror:” Jerome Zanchius [1516-1590]

As you can see the early Church had a wonderful historical understanding of prophecy. All of these men wrote before Rome fell, yet they all knew that it would be divided because of the prophecies of Daniel. Bishop Hippolytus [who wrote around 200 AD] had an especially astounding understanding of the Book of Daniel. From his prophetic studies he predicted the restoration of the nation of Israel and even accurately predicted the timing of the Roman Empire’s fall as seen in the following quote:

“ of necessity the fourth beast [the Roman Empire], as being strong and mightier than all that were before it, will reign 500 years. When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them.” – Hippolytus Exegetical On Daniel 2

If you begin counting from the time Rome captured Palestine in 63 BC and add 500 years you come to the latter half of the fifth century [464AD]. Which is quite remarkable seeing that the Roman Empire was divided into ten nations in 476 AD.

Identifying The Little Horn

Has the ‘Man of Sin’ been revealed? Is it possible for us to identify the ‘little horn’ of Daniel Seven? It certainly is. Notice that pagan Rome fell and was divided into these ten kingdoms in 476 AD: the Alamannis (Germany), Visigoths (Spain), The Franks (France), The Sueves which is now called Portugal, Burgundians (Switzerland), Anglo Saxons (England), Lombards (Italy), The Ostrogoths, Vandals and the Herulis. According to Scriptures the entity that is called the ‘little horn’ would come after the division and would pluck up three of these ten horns. We know that seven of these ten nations still exist today. So if we find what destroyed the missing three, we will know who the ‘little horn’ is.

According to history the three kingdoms that are missing are the three that adhered to Arianism in opposition to the orthodox Roman Catholic faith (the "Catholic faith" was the official religion of the empire) and they were therefore annihilated for it. History testifies that the Herulis (493AD), the Vandals

(534AD) and the Ostrogoths (538AD) were all 'plucked up' for their rejection of the Pope. Notice the following historical quote:

“AD 538, the year when the Ostrogoths collapsed. It was out of the smoking ruins of the western Roman Empire and after the overthrow of the three Arian kingdoms that the pope of Rome emerged as the most important single individual in the West, the head of a closely organized church with a carefully defined creed and with vast potential for political influence. Dozens of writers have pointed out that the real survivor of the ancient Roman Empire was the Church of Rome”. -**E.G. McKenzie, "Catholic Church" p. 14.**

History testifies that shortly after the fall of the Roman Empire a new and diverse civil power arose and soon it forced most of Europe to bow down in reverent obedience to it. That entity is the Papacy of Rome. Consider the following historical quotes:

“Long ages ago, when Rome through the neglect of the Western emperors was left to the mercy of the barbarous hordes, the Romans turned to one figure for aid and protection, and asked him to rule them; and thus, in this simple manner, the best title of all to kingly right, commenced the temporal sovereignty of the popes... And meekly stepping to the throne of Caesar, the vicar of Christ took up the scepter to which the emperors and kings of Europe were to bow in reverence through out so many ages.” – American Catholic Quarterly Review, April 1911.

“Another consequence of the fall of the Roman power in the West was the development of the Papacy. In the absence of an emperor in the West, the popes rapidly gained influence and power, and soon built up an ecclesiastical empire that in some respects took the place of the old empire and carried on its civilizing work.” Philip Van Ness Myers, Rome: Its Rise and Fall, General History for Colleges, Pg. 316.

“In a few centuries the pope had become in theory, and to a certain extent in practice, the high priest, censor, judge and divine monarch of Christendom” *Well's Outline of History* pg 526.

In its great pride and arrogance the Papacy soon exalted its self above the Kings of the earth. The Pope claimed to hold the seat of Caesar and the place of Christ on earth. He also claimed the power to enthrone kings and to dethrone kings. And the Monarchs of the nations of Europe trembled under the heavy hand of the Pope. Consider the following claims of the Papacy:

Pope Boniface VIII decreed in 1303, that “Temporal authority [Kings] must be subject to spiritual power [The Pope]”. This decree is still part of Canon Law in the Roman Church.

Pope Pius IV (1566-1572) in his famous Bull published against Queen Elizabeth stated: “He that reigneth on high made him alone (the pope) prince over all people and all kingdoms, to pluck up, destroy, scatter, consume, plant and build.”

The Englishman, Cardinal Manning, said: ”The right of deposing kings is inherent in the supreme sovereignty which the popes, as viceregents of Christ, exercise over all Christian nations.”

The Encyclical of Pope Pius IX, issued in 1864, asserted that the Papacy has the following rights:

1. The right to require the State not to leave any man free to profess his own religion;
2. The right to employ force;
3. The right to claim dominion in temporal things;
4. The right to hold princes and kings in subjection;

At the turn of the nineteenth century Dr. Mananus de Luca, SJ, Professor of Canon Law at the Gregorian University at Rome, said: “The Catholic Church has the right and the duty to kill heretics, because it is by fire and sword that heresy can be extirpated.....The only recourse is to put them to death. Repentance cannot be allowed to save civil criminals.”

Examining the Characteristics of the Little Horn.

Now let’s look at the characteristics of this entity and see if the Roman Catholic Church fits every aspect of the description provided by Daniel.

Did the Papacy come to civil power after the fall of Rome? Yes.

Pope Pius IX gave this remarkable testimony concerning the Papacy receiving its civil power at the fall of the Roman Empire:

"It is, therefore, by a particular decree of Divine Providence that, at the fall of the Roman Empire and its partition into separate kingdoms, the Roman Pontiff, whom Christ made the head and center of his entire Church, acquired civil power." – Pius IX, Apostolic Letter Cum Catholica Ecclesia, March 26, 1860.

Source: *Papal Teachings: The Church*, selected and arranged by the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, translated by Mother E. O'Gorman, R.S.C.J., Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, St. Paul Editions, Boston, 1980, 1962 by Daughters of St. Paul, Library of Congress catalog card number 62-12454, par. #225,

Is the Pope both the head of a state and a prophet [religious leader]? Yes. He is the head of the Vatican which is the smallest nation on earth [the littlest horn] and of course he claims to be a prophet, priest and king.

Is the Vatican located in the midst of the Divided Roman Empire? Yes. In the very heart of Rome. These things are proven by the following quote from the Encarta Encyclopedia:

"Vatican City, independent state, under the absolute authority of the pope of the Roman Catholic church. It is an enclave within Rome, Italy, with an area of 44 hectares (110 acres). The smallest independent country in the world"

Did the Pope Hold the Seat of Rome for 1260 Years? Yes. Did the Church of Rome rule for '*A time and times and dividing (a half) of time*'? Yes it did! First let's establish what is meant by this phrase. Here a time means a 'year'. So a year plus two years (times) plus a divided year (a half) is 3 ½ years. This is the same period given by John in Revelation 12:6, 14, 13:5. So 3 ½ years or 42 months, which is 1260 prophetic days is the time period. So if we remember that in prophecy God has "**appointed thee each day for a year**" (**Ezekiel 4:6**); we clearly see that Papal Rome was given its civil power for 1260 years.

If we begin to count from the time that the Church of Rome gained its civil power with the fall of the Ostrogoths in 538 AD and add 1260 years, we come to the year 1798. Was Civil Authority removed from the Papal seat at this time? *YES!* The French General Berthier took Pope Pius VI captive thus for a time ending the civil reign of the Papacy. As history testifies:

“Vigilius...ascended the papal chair (538 A.D.) under the military protection of Belisarius.” History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 327

“In 1798 General Berthier made his entrance into Rome, abolished the papal government, and established a secular one.” -Encyclopedia Britannica 1941 edition

Was Rome a Persecuting Power? YES.

During this 1260 year period were the true followers of God persecuted by Papal Rome?

“The Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a complete knowledge of history” (William E. H. Lecky,, History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, Vol. II, pp. 35, 37).

The conservative estimates of those killed by the Roman Catholic Church is 50 million, but some reckon that it is closer to 150 million. Who with any knowledge of the persecutions of the Waldensese, the ravages of the Duke of Alva, the fires of Smithfield; the tortures of Goa, the crusades, the massacres, and the inquisitions could doubt that Papal Rome made war with the saints and prevailed against them? I would urge everyone to read “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs” which contains much information concerning the persecutions of Rome..

Does the Roman Church speak ‘against’ or ‘blaspheme’ the Most High? YES!

Let’s first look at two biblical ways that man can ‘blaspheme’. When Christ forgave the sins of the man ‘sick with palsy’ the scribes said he blasphemed because “*Who can forgive sins but God only?*” (Mark 2:5-7). The scribes were correct that it is blasphemy for a mere man to say he can ‘forgive sin’ but Christ

was God in the flesh. Does the Pope claim to have the power to forgive sins? Yes.

“An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, the guilt of which has been forgiven” -- New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia , indulgence

“Absolution is the remission of sin, or of the punishment due to sin, granted by the Church...

the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the Apostles and to their lawful successors for the reconciling of the faithful who have sinned after baptism... Leo the Great does not hesitate to assert that pardon is impossible without the prayer of the priest.” – New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia , Absolution

Pope Benedict XVI: “Christ has chosen us... to be the only ones able to forgive sins in his name. Therefore, it is a specific ecclesial service that we must make a priority” Catholic News Service Feb 17, 2007

The Church also teaches: “there are seven deadly sins which can be forgiven by no one, but the Pope himself.”

The Pope claims to have the judicial power to forgive sins. Roman Catholics are taught that if it is at all possible, they must go to a Priest to have their sins forgiven. Did the Apostles pretend to have the power to forgive sins? Never! When someone sinned after they were baptized the Apostles told them to “repent and pray to God that you might be forgiven” [Acts 8:22].

Next we find that when Jesus said, “*I and my Father are One*” the Jews accused him of blasphemy because “*Thou being a man makest thyself God*” (*John 10:30-33*). Of course Jesus is God, the Second Person of the Godhead. But does the Pope claim to hold the place of God on earth?

Pope Leo XIII said of himself, "The supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires... complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God himself." – Encyclical promulgated on January 10, 1890, #22-24.

Pope Nicholas- "I am all in all and above all, so that God himself, and I, the Vicar of God, hath both one consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do... Wherefore, if those things that I do be said not to be done of man, but of God, WHAT CAN YOU MAKE ME BUT GOD?... I then, being above all prelates, seem by this reason to be ABOVE ALL GODS. Wherefore, no marvel if it be in my power to dispense with all things, yea, with the precepts of Christ." *Decretales Domini Gregori ix Translatione Episcoporum*, (on the Transference of Bishops), title 7, chapter 3; *Corpus Juris Canonice* (2nd Leipzig ed., 1881), col. 99; (Paris, 1612), tom. 2, *Decretales*, col. 205 (while Innocent III was Pope).

When Pope Pius X was Archbishop of Venice, he stated: "The pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ Himself, hidden under the veil of the flesh. Does the pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks. Does the pope accord a favour or pronounce an anathema? It is Jesus Christ who accords the favour or pronounces that anathema. So that when the pope speaks we have no business to examine."-- *The Catholic National*, July, 1895

Pope Pius IX- "I alone despite my unworthiness, am the successor of the Apostles, the Vicar of Jesus Christ: I alone have the mission to guide and direct the barge of Peter; I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE." – *History of the Christian Church* by Henry Charles Sheldon pg 59.

The Pope claims to be the "Vicar of Christ". The term Vicar means a substitute for or one who stands in the place of another. It is interesting to note that the Greek term "ante" has two meanings: 1. *In opposition to* or 2. *in the place of*. Thus the term "vicar of Christ" could be translated "anti-christ".

Does the Church of Rome Think to Change 'Times and Law'? YES!

Which law would this be referring to? Of course the Law of the Most High, it is no strange thing to change the laws of man. So does the Church of Rome claim the power to change the Law of God?

"The Pope has the power **to change times, to abrogate laws**, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ... The Pope has the authority and often exercised it, to dispense with the command of Christ." *Decretal, de Tranlatic*

Episcop. Cap. (The Pope can modify divine law.) Ferraris' *Ecclesiastical Dictionary*.

Pope Innocent III - "We may according to the fullness of our power, dispose of the law and dispense above the law. Those whom the Pope of Rome doth separates, it is not a man that separates them but God. For the Pope holdeth place on earth, not simply of a man but of the true God." (1 book of Gregory 9Decret.C3)

For an example of the Papacy attempting to appeal and to alter the Law of God we can look at the Second and the Fourth Commandments of the Decalogue. In many of the Catechisms of Rome the Second Commandment, which prohibits bowing to images [Exodus 20:5], is totally removed and the Tenth Commandment which forbids covetousness is split into that they may still have Ten Commandments. Not only does Rome remove the Second Commandment, but it declares a curse upon all who would teach that it is wrong to bow to an image. The following is a Decree from the Council of Trent:

"great profit is derived from all holy images... which we kiss and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves... But if anyone should teach or maintain anything contrary to these decrees, let him be anathema." (H. J. Schroeder, O. P., *The Canons And Decrees Of The Council Of Trent*, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978, p. 216)

Concerning the Fourth Commandment which commands men to remember the Sabbath Day [Exodus 20:8-10] the Roman Catholic Church admits the following:

Q. "Which is the Sabbath day?" *A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.* Q. "Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?" *A. "We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic church, in the counsel of Laodicea (336 A.D.) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday"* *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, by Rev. Peter Geirman, Second Edition, pg.50

"I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The bible says; "Remember the

Sabbath day to keep it holy." The Catholic Church says: "NO. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week." And LO! The entire civilized world bows down in a reverence obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church." *T. Enright, C.S.S.R, in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, Feb. 18, 1844.*

Has the Papacy been recognized as the Anti-Christ historically? Yes.

The early Church taught that anyone who would assume the title of "Universal Bishop or Priest" would be the forerunner of antichrist, in the sixth century even the Bishop of Rome acknowledged this:

'I confidently say that whoever calls himself, or desires to be called, the Universal Priest [or Bishop], is the forerunner of Antichrist in his pride, because by exalting himself he places himself above others. Nor is his pride different from that which leads Antichrist to his error, because as that wicked one wishes to be thought a god above all men, so he who desires to be called the sole priest exalts himself above all other priests.' – Pope Gregory, Lib. 7 Ep. 154

Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo [like many others of his day] agreed with Gregory in saying: "*I say confidently therefore, that whosoever calls himself Universal Bishop, or even desires in his pride to be called such, is the forerunner of antichrist.*" – Augustine, bishop of Hippo (540–604)

Yet as we know from History that it was not long before Pope Boniface III [607AD] accepted the very title from Emperor Phocas. John Huss, a great reformer, appeared before the faculty of Paris in 1413 AD and declared that the Pope was not the Universal Bishop. The declaration of John Huss was rejected, and shortly afterward he was declared an heretic by the Church of Rome. He was then chained to a pole and burned to death.

Every characteristic of the little horn has been fulfilled by the Papacy. The Papacy has been recognized as the 'little horn' from the earliest times. All of the Reformation leaders considered the Pope the Antichrist, including Martin Luther,

John Calvin, John Huss and their successors in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries. Bible translator William Tyndale identified the Pope as the Antichrist in his treatise “The Practice of Prelates” and in the Preface to the 1534 edition of his New Testament. The translators of the Authorized King James Version also identified the Papacy as such. Many of the early Protestant Bibles contained dramatic wood cuttings portraying the Scarlet Woman of Revelation 17, plainly identifying the Roman Catholic Church with this apostate religious system. In his 1893 work titled “Union with Rome”, Bishop Christopher Wordsworth of the Church of England stated the view which prevailed among Protestants at that time: "... we tremble at the sight, while we read the inscription, emblazoned in large letters, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great,' written by the hand of St. John, guided by the Holy Spirit of God, on the forehead of the Church of Rome." These examples could be multiplied almost endlessly. Old-line Protestants, Baptists, and other Fundamentalist Christians continue today to identify Rome as the ‘anti-christ’ the little horn of Daniel Chapter Seven.

EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST.

Did the Apostasy of the Church of Rome take God by surprise? By no means. A great falling away of the Church was predicted by Christ and the Apostles.

The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy said:

“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” – 1 Timothy 4:1

The Apostle John predicted that the Anti-Christ would be an Apostate, who would forsake the doctrines of the Apostles by saying:

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of

us.” - 1st John 2:18-19

Christ predicted the Apostasy of the Church in the parable of the mustard seed [Matthew 13:31-32]. According to the parable the Church would begin small and humble, like a single mustard seed, but soon it would grow far beyond its intended size. It would become a great tree, so great that the birds would find lodging in it. Some men look at this as a good parable, but it is not. It is predicting that the Church would forsake its intended path and grow so in power and stature in the world that the devils would make their home in it. You see Christ said that the birds represent devils [Matthew 13:4,19]. And the false religious system of Revelation Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen, which we will see is apostate Christendom, is said to be a cage for every unclean and hateful bird [Revelation 18:2].

The Apostle Paul predicted that the Man of Sin would come forth from a Great Apostasy when he said that the coming of Christ to gather his people could not come “except there come a falling away first and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”- **2 Thessalonians 2:3**. Notice that the man of sin is called the Son of Perdition. This is a title held only by Apostates, like Judas Iscariot, who was a false apostle [John 17:12].

The Woman In the Wilderness

The Apostasy of the Church of Rome was clearly predicted in the Book of Revelation. Notice in Chapters twelve we are introduced to a beautiful and holy woman. She is characterized by the fact that she keeps the Commandments of GOD and the Testimony of Jesus Christ, thus she walks in truth. Who is she? She is the ‘Lady’ that John wrote of in his epistles, whose children walked in the truth. She is the true Church of Jesus Christ [2nd John 1:1,4]. The whole imagery of this woman is taken from Genesis 37:9, as a picture of spiritual Israel, the true Church of God. Not the physical nation of Israel who rejects Jesus Christ, but Spiritual Israel, those who are the seed of Abraham by faith, and Jew’s inwardly [Roman 2:29, 4:16]. This woman is no other than the Bride of Christ, his Church. This interpretation has been taught consistently through out the

history of the Church. Notice the following quotes:

Hippolytus [170-236AD] “By the woman then clothed with the sun,” he meant most manifestly the Church, endued with the Father’s word, whose brightness is above the sun. And by the “moon under her feet” he referred to her being adorned, like the moon, with heavenly glory. And the words, “upon her head a crown of twelve stars,” refer to the twelve apostles by whom the Church was founded.” – Hippolytus Treatise on Christ and AntiChrist.

Victorinus [250AD] – “The woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown of twelve stars upon her head, and travailing in her pains, is the ancient Church” Commentary on the Apocalypse

Methodius [312AD] – “he woman who appeared in heaven clothed with the sun, and crowned with twelve stars, and having the moon for her footstool, and being with child, and travailing in birth, is certainly, according to the accurate interpretation, our mother... the Church whose children shall come to her with all speed” Banquet of the Ten Virgins.

Geneva Bible [1599] “The woman is... a type of the true holy Church”

The Red Dragon.

We are told that the woman is persecuted by the red dragon, who attempted to devour Christ when he was born. Who is the red dragon? It is Satan [Revelation 12:9]. But what did Satan use in his attempt to destroy Christ at his birth? A dragon is a beast, and we know that a beast represents a Kingdom [Daniel 7:23]. What Kingdom did Satan use? He used the Government of the Roman Empire through King Herod in his attempt to murder Christ as soon as he was born [Matthew 2:16]. It was also, as you remember, Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross and pierced his side. Thus the dragon is the pagan Roman Emperor. This is also the historic interpretation of the early Church.

Victorinus [250AD] “Now, that he says that this dragon was

of a red color — that is, of a purple color — the result of his work gave him such a color. For from the beginning (as the Lord says) he was a murderer; and he has oppressed the whole of the human race, not so much by the obligation of death, as, moreover, by the various forms of destruction and fatal mischiefs. His seven heads were the seven kings of the Romans, of whom also is Antichrist, as we have said above.”
– Commentary on the Apocalypse.

Now notice the ten horns of the dragon [Revelation 12:3]. They are not crowned in this chapter, but they are wearing their crowns in the next [Revelation 13:1]. What does this signify? Remember the ten horns are the ten divisions of Rome when it was divided in 476 AD. Thus the dragon of chapter twelve represents to us the persecutions of the Roman Government against the Church from the birth of Christ until Rome was divided. Revelation 13 on the other hand tells us of the persecutions after Rome fell and the ‘little horn’ rose. Which we have already studied in Daniel chapter seven. Right now we want to focus on this woman.

Where Does She Flee?

According to Scriptures the woman flees into the wilderness [Revelation 12:6, 14] where she has a place prepared by God, and so it was. The early church was heavily persecuted by the Roman Empire, thousands and thousands of them were slaughtered for their faith in Christ. Christians were forced to meet in the wilderness places, in caves and in mountains. Some met in the catacombs. Some of the most severe persecutions of the first century came under the hand of Emperor Nero. He was the Emperor who had the Apostle Paul beheaded. These persecutions continued until about 300 AD.

The Lady Becomes A Harlot.

Now let us do two things. Let us travel in time about five centuries from the time of Nero to the time that the Roman Empire was divided and the ten horns were in power [Revelation 17:12] and while there let’s travel to the wilderness where our Lady did flee. How shall we do this? The Spirit shall

take us there through the writings of John, found in Revelation Chapter Seventeen. And here we read of her:

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. [Revelation 17:3-5].”

What a shocking change five centuries have made upon our lady! She has lost her celestial beauty that God adorned her with, and she has draped herself with the garb of the world. She has lost her purity and she has become a harlot. And what might be most startling is the fact that she is no longer fleeing from the dragon, but rather she has mounted the beast and now holds the reigns of the Empire.

How can a Church become a harlot? She must unite herself with another in an unlawful union. Whom has she united with? The Bible tells us:

“ With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”– Revelation 17:2.

The beautiful bride has been united in fornication with the Kings of the earth. There has been an ungodly union between the Roman Government, which once persecuted her and the Church of GOD! Thus it is by her union with the State, that this Church has made herself a harlot.

Let us add this note here because I think it is needed. Though the Bible predicted so great an apostasy that much of professed Christendom would become a part of this false religious system, it also promises us that God would reserve a remnant for himself [Revelation 12:17]. The visible Church that most of the

world recognizes as Christianity may have become a harlot, but God's invisible Church, his faithful bride, has not left the world. She is still in the wilderness. Her children usually are not great political leaders nor does the world follow after them. But they each have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and they are recognized by their faith in Christ and their obedience to the word of God [Revelation 14:12].

**But which Church is it that is here called "Babylon"?
Where is her location?**

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. And here is the mind which hath wisdom.... The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." Revelation 17:18,9.

Which city reigned over the kings of the earth in John's day? It was Rome, the City of Seven Hills. But why is Rome called Babylon? The early Church used the term Babylon as a code word for Rome. And from the earliest time this woman has been recognized as Rome.

Tertullian (155–222) "So, again, Babylon, in our own John, is a figure of the city Rome, as being equally great and proud of her sway, and triumphant over the saints." – Tertulian Answer to the Jews Chapter 9

"[Rome] That powerful state which presides over the seven mountains and very many waters, has merited from the Lord the appellation of a prostitute." – Tertulian Book 2 Chapter 12

Hippolytus [170-236] "Tell me, blessed John, apostle and disciple of the Lord, what didst thou see and hear concerning Babylon? Arise, and speak; for it sent thee also into banishment [Rome Banished John]. "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." – Treatise on Christ and AntiChrist.

Victorinus [250AD]“The seven heads are the seven hills, on which the woman sitteth. That is, the city of Rome”. – Commentary on the Apocalypse

Eusebius [325AD] “And Peter makes mention of Mark in his first epistle which they say that he wrote in Rome itself, as is indicated by him, when he calls the city, by a figure, Babylon” – Church History Eusebius Book 2 Chapter 15.

St. Jerome [382AD] “Read the apocalypse of John, and consider what is sung therein of the woman arrayed in purple, and of the blasphemy written upon her brow, of the seven mountains, of the many waters, and of the end of Babylon. “Come out of her, my people,” so the Lord says, “that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” It is true [of] that Rome...” – Letters of St. Jerome, letter 46.

Augustine [425AD] “Rome herself is like a second Babylon..... To be brief, the city of Rome was rounded, like another Babylon, and as it were the daughter of the former Babylon, ” – Augustine The City Of GOD Book 18, Chapter 2, 22

When did the Church unite to the Roman State? In 312 AD, the Roman Emperor Constantine professed to be a Christian. He had previously been a pagan devoted to the worship of the sun-god Mithra. In AD 313, Constantine, in the Edict of Milan, ordered that all persecution of Christians to be stopped. He also ordered all property taken from Christians during the preceding years of persecution to be returned. Constantine then began to steadily increase the authority of the Roman Bishop. (*see the Encyclopedia Britannica, Edict of Milan*)

Then in 330 AD Emperor Constantine moved his capital to Constantinople, and for all practical purposes he turned over the city of Rome to the Roman Pontiff. Who continued to grow in power and pride.

In March of 533 AD Justinian proclaimed the Pope to be the “Head of All Churches” and gave him the authority to ‘correct heretics’. In his famous letter to John the Archbishop of Rome Justinian declared

“We do not suffer that anything which is mooted, however

clear and unquestionable, pertaining to the state of the churches, should fail to be made known to Your Holiness, as being THE HEAD OF ALL THE CHURCHES. For as we have said before we are zealous for the increase of the honor and authority of your see in all respects”. (*Code of Justinian, lib.1 tit. 1; as given by R.F. Littledale in the Peterine Claims, Pg. 293.*)

As we have before seen, in 538AD Vigilius was given the papal chair by the Emperor and was provided military protection by Belisarius. By 800 AD the Papacy, by all practical purposes, had become the Emperor of the west. As noted in the Encarta Encyclopedia.

“The pope (Leo III) thus broke the ties with Constantinople and created a new western empire by crowning Charlemagne emperor of the Romans on Christmas Day, 800... . Leo and his successors definitely benefited from gaining temporal authority over central Italy, in the region known as the Papal States. The coronation also symbolically promoted both the papacy and the Frankish kings to a level of authority comparable only to that of the Byzantine emperor. . When Leo's successor seized an opportunity to continue the tradition by crowning Charlemagne's son Louis I in 817, the precedent of papal coronation was established. By granting the title of emperor, the papacy gained a huge influence over all subsequent imperial candidates, ensuring the pope's role in legitimizing western emperors for centuries to come.” (*Encarta Encyclopedia --- The Holy Roman Empire*).

The Papacy’s “Holy Roman” Empire was established on Christmas Day 800AD, and it endured for one thousand years. It was officially dissolved in 1806 AD by Emperor Francis II. For most of its duration it was comprised of the following seven states: Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, and of course Italy.

The Wine of Her Fornication.

What is in the cup of the harlot? It is the wine of her fornication, the mingled drink of Babylon. During his reign, Emperor Constantine worked hard to keep the Empire united by making the Christian religion more acceptable to the pagans. The Church, willing to compromise with the Emperor, accepted many pagan customs and doctrines, especially from the sun

worshippers. Here is a quote from the Roman Catholic, Cardinal Newman:

“We are told by Eusebius, that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments, to which they had been accustomed in their own..... The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasions with branches of trees, incense, lamps and candles; votive offerings on recovery from illness; holy water, asylums; holy days and seasons [as in Christmas and Easter], use of calendars, processions, blessings on the field, sacerdotal vestments, the tonsure (shaving of the head), the ring in marriage, turning to the east, images at a later date, perhaps the ecclesiastical chant, are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the church.” - Cardinal Newman, Development of Christian Doctrine, pages 272, 273.

Doctrines like purgatory, prayers for the dead, the veneration of images, infant baptism, the sanctity of Sunday, and a host of other false doctrines were eventually adopted by the Roman Church. Thus in Rome the doctrines of Christianity and Paganism were blended together forming the deadly wine of the Harlot [Revelation 17:4].

Decked With Gold and Precious Stones and Pearls

The Harlot is shown to be very rich. Some may ask: Is the Roman Catholic Church rich? It is by far the wealthiest institution on earth. As you have probably seen on the news, she has paid out Billions of dollars in attempts at settling the sex abuse scandals thus far and they have Trillions more. For instance, the value of their sculptures by such masters as Michelangelo, along with paintings by the world's greatest artists, and countless other art treasures and ancient documents which Rome possesses are absolutely beyond calculation.

How did she obtain her riches? Most of Rome's wealth has been acquired through the sale of salvation [dispensations and indulgences]. Untold billions of dollars have been paid to her by those who thought they were purchasing heaven for themselves or one of their loved ones. Also she acquired her wealth through the persecution of those Christians and Jews who would not accept the Pope. You see the Roman Catholic Church acquired the property of the victims of the Inquisitions.

Even the dead were exhumed to face trial for heresy and property was taken from their heirs by the Church.

Arrayed In Purple And Scarlet

Purple and scarlet were the colors of the Roman Empire and Caesar, they were of course adopted by the Papacy. According to the laws of the Church of Rome purple is to be worn by the Pope and Bishops and Scarlet is to be worn by the Cardinals. [See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1976), pp. 103-04].

The Mother of Harlots

What does it mean that she is the “Mother of Harlots”? It means that she has given birth to other Churches. Churches have sprung from her bosom that hold to her false doctrines. As the Bible says: “As is the mother, so is her daughter.”--Ezekiel 16:44. Does Rome admit to being the Mother of these churches? Yes.

“the Roman Church, is the MOTHER AND MISTRESS OF ALL CHURCHES” (*ibid.*, p. 53 -- *Seventh Session, Sacrament Of Baptism, Canon 3*)

The Mystery Religion

The Ancient Kingdom of Babylon was known for its “Mystery Religion”. In the Mysteries of Babylon (the religion of Baal), the King was also the high priest, and held the title of *Pontifex Maximuz*. King Nebuchadnezzar's grandchild, Belshazzar was the last to hold the title in the kingdom of Babylon (*Daniel 5*). After Belshazzar's death, scholars say, the Mysteries of Babylon continued in its entirety in Pergamos, a city of Asia minor. Christ in the Book of Revelation made references to the Mysteries, their 'Pontifex Maximuz' and their increasing influence in the church during the first century. In his letter to the church of Pergamos he states:

"I know thy works, where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat (Throne) is" ,, "wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth" Revelation 2:13.

It is clear that what Christ considered to be the 'Throne of Satan' was

located in Pergamos in the first century. How can we be sure that the 'Throne' is speaking of the 'Pontifex Maximus' of Baal worship? Verse 14 states "*But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Ba'laam,*" we know that Balaam was a prophet of Baal (Numbers 22:41).

From Pergamos, the Mysteries migrated to Rome *{namely in the form of the 'Mithra' cult}* where the title 'Pontifex Maximuz' was given to the Caesars, who proclaimed themselves to be 'god on earth'. Gratian was the last Roman Emperor to hold the title, and it was he who passed the title over to the Bishop of Rome in 383 AD. The Pope has held it ever since [see Columbia Encyclopedia Sixth Edition. 2001-05].

Here it would be interesting to note the meaning of Antipas, Christ's faithful martyr [Revelation 2:13]. There is no historical record of a person by this name, but the name itself has a special meaning. It literally means: *Against the Papa [Pope]*. Many Scholars believe that Antipas represents all the faithful Saints of God who were martyred by the Papacy.

In the Babylonian religion, the ancient Pontifex was also seen as the grand "interpreter" of the Roman Mysteries and he held the keys of Janus (Baal) and Cybele (Ashtoreth), thus he was able to open the dark secrets of the Mysteries. In 431 A.D. the Pope broadly declared his pre-eminence, as the holder of the keys of Peter. It was claimed then as it is now that the Apostle Peter, the Apostle of the Jews '*Circumcised*' (*Galatians 2:7*), set upon a throne in Rome, and gave his authority and the keys of heaven to the Roman church. This grand lie, raised the Pope to the position of 'Pontifex Maximuz' and finished the foundation of the Mysteries which began to be laid by Constantine in 325 A.D. In the Roman Catholic Church today you have a blending of Christianity and the Babylonian Mystery religion. Sadly many protestant churches continue to hold to the unbiblical traditions and customs of this religious harlot. God is calling his people to separate from this religious confusion [Revelation 18:4].

The Future of The Papacy.

As we have seen, the Papacy fulfills every aspect of the prophecies that deal with the 'little horn' of Daniel 7 and the

Harlot of Revelation 17. There is no other entity in the history of the world which could even come close to being either. But before we close this topic we would like to consider what the Bible predicts about the future of this entity.

Revelation Chapter Thirteen.

Revelation Chapter Thirteen begins by drawing the reader's mind back to the prophecy of Daniel Seven. The four beasts of Daniel are named in verses one and two. Notice they are mentioned in the opposite order because John is now looking backward through history, while Daniel was seeing into the future. That the 'Little Horn' of Daniel 7 and this first Beast of Revelation 13 are the same entity we offer this six-point comparison as given by Uriah Smith found in his book titled 'Daniel and the Revelation'.

“1. The little horn was a blasphemous power. “He shall speak great words against the Most High” Daniel 7:25. The leopard beast of Revelation 13:6 does the same. “He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God”. 2. The little horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them (in) Daniel 7:21. This beast also (Revelation 13:7) makes war with the saints and overcomes them. 3. The little horn had a mouth speaking great things (Daniel 7:8,20). Of this beast we read: “There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” (Revelation 13:5). 4. The little horn arose on the cessation of the pagan from of the Roman Empire. The beast of Revelation 13:2 arises at the same time; for the dragon, pagan Rome, gives him his power, his seat, and great authority. 5. Power was given to the little horn to continue for a time, times and the dividing of time, or 1260 years (Daniel 7:25). To this beast also power was given for forty-two months, or 1260 years (Revelation 13:5). 6. At the end of that specified period of 1260 years the “saints”, “times” and “law” were to be taken out of the “hand” of the little horn (Daniel 7:25). At the end of the same period, the leopard beast was himself to be led “into captivity” Revelation 13:10.”

Of course these things were fulfilled in 1798 when the French General Berthier took Pope Pius VI captive, thus abolishing the

Papal Government. At which time the nations of the world thought the Papacy was dead. She had been stricken with the Sword of the Spirit by the Reformers and the Beast which had kept the world captive was now lead into Captivity. Yet the Bible predicted that the Beast that was wounded unto death, would be revived [Revelation 13:14]. Many Bible Scholars consider the Lamb Like Beast of Revelation 13:11, who is also called the 'False Prophet' [Revelation 19:20] to be a symbol of the modern resurrected Papacy.

When was the Papacy revived?

“In 1929 the kingdom of Italy and the papacy reached an agreement known as the Lateran Treaty. The treaty recognized the Vatican City as an independent state under the sovereignty of the pope and made Roman Catholicism the official religion of Italy. Benito Mussolini signed the treaty for the Italian government, and Pietro Cardinal Gaspari signed for the papacy.”– Encarta Encyclopedia, Lateran Treaty Article

On February 11, 1929, the Italian government recognized Vatican City as an independent state, thus making the Pope once again a Priest and King. In the San Francisco Newspaper this prophetic headline appeared.

"Mussolini and Gaspari Sign Historic Pact.....Heal Wound of Many Years." -The San Francisco Chronicle 7-7-1929

Since its resurrection in 1929 the Papacy has grown rapidly in political power. For instance, over two-hundred world leaders attended the funeral of John Paul II, whom they called, "Holy Father". The Papacy is also working frantically to unite the Churches and religions of the world under its umbrella.

The Image of the Beast

The Bible predicts that soon the people of the earth will be persuaded by the Beast who looks Christian [like a Lamb], but is inwardly devilish [speaks like a dragon] to make an image, or to build a likeness of the first beast, which was the Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire was of course the nations of

Europe united under the Papacy.

Few people realize that World War II was an attempt by two Roman Catholics to forcibly re-establish the Holy Roman Empire. Hitler and Mussolini [who were both Roman Catholics] were the axis Powers of World War Two and were both eager to restore the Empire to “glory”. In 1936, Mussolini pompously proclaimed that what Italians were seeing was, “the reappearance of the Empire on the fated hills of Rome”. And remember according to the Lateran Treaty Roman Catholicism would become the official religion of whatever nation that fell into the hands of Mussolini. Hitler, who was a nominal Catholic, continually preached his vision of “Third Reich [empire]”. Even Hitler’s hatred for the Jews stemmed firstly from his Roman Catholic roots. Few today realize that Catholicism had for centuries been the pinnacle of antisemitism. For example, Pope Innocent III, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, stated that because of their involvement in the execution of Jesus, the Jewish people were in a state of "perpetual subservience." He also required them to wear distinctive clothing and sanctioned barring Jews from certain professions. It is recorded that Hitler in a friendly session with the Catholic Bishop Bering and Monsignor Steinman observed that his policy for the Jews, after all, was "what the church had done for 1,500 years." Pope Pius XII, who has been called “Hitler’s Pope” by many scholars, put up absolutely no public resistance to the work of Hitler and Mussolini. The following is a quote from the Encarta Encyclopedia:

“The Pope Pius XII never criticized the persecution of the Jews in an encyclical, nor did he ever threaten to excommunicate Hitler, nominally a Catholic, or other Catholics involved in the Holocaust. Moreover, although the pope and his advisers were fully informed about the extermination of the Jews during World War II, they refused to condemn it” – Encarta Encyclopedia

Yet Hitler’s war to re-unite Europe forcibly was bound to fail, because the Bible predicted that the people of Europe would not be forced to build the image, but that they would willingly agree to build it. The Bible also predicted that the Kings of

Europe would not have their sovereignty forcibly taken from them but rather that they would freely agree to give it up to the Beast [Revelation 13:14, 17:17].

Since the end of World War II the Papacy has attempted to re-establish the Holy Roman Empire not by brute force, but by flatteries and promises of peace. The Pope has been very busy persuading the leaders of Europe to give up their national sovereignty and to unite together in what is called the 'European Union'. Commenting on the religious factor within the European Union, the *Wilson Quarterly* had this to say in a review on this subject which appeared in *European Union Politics*, June 2001:

“While the EU may be chiefly an economic community, European integration and religion, particularly Catholicism, ‘were explicitly linked, theoretically and politically,’ when the dream of unity took shape in the early years after World War ii ... ‘European integration in the 1950s was largely a Christian Democratic project, led by devout Catholics... ‘The Protestant countries are reluctant to abandon sovereignty for historical and political reasons,’ while the Catholic Church ‘has consistently supported both the European Union and its expansion.’ ... [T]he most devout sectarian Protestants, such as Calvinists in the Netherlands and Northern Ireland, ‘are the least fond of the European Union’”.

Since the year 2000 Rome has increased its pressure on the nations of the EU. For example, during September of 2002 the Pope battered away at the convention’s door in an attempt to force the constituents to recognize Catholicism in the European Constitution.

“For the third time in 12 days, John Paul ii insisted that a European constitution should recognize the role of Christianity in the continent’s history. ... In his address today, the pope said, ‘the Holy See has favored the process of unification of Europe since the beginning,’ and he underlined ‘the spiritual-cultural identity’ of the continent. ... The Holy Father then emphasized the need to introduce a ‘clear reference to God and to the Christian faith’ in the European Constitutional Charter, for which he requested the ‘specific

contribution' of German experts and political leaders" (Zenit, Sept. 13, 2002).

Today the European Union is becoming a true force in the World, its Euro has not only out gained the American Dollar, but has also become more stable than its American counterpart. Also the nations of the world who once looked only to America for help, has now begun to seek help from the European Union. Soon the EU under the shadow of Rome will be the greatest power on earth, and its influence shall be felt through out the world.

The Number of His Name.

The Bible gives us the number of the beast "666" and tells us to Count it [Revelation 13:18]. Count in the original Greek text is the word psephizo and this is the only time in the Bible it is used. The word means to use pebbles (small stones) in enumeration.--to compute. You see in the ancient world letters was given numerical value. For example the Roman Numerals are also letters. V represents the number 5. X represents the number 10 and so forth. The Hebrews and the Greeks would also assign a number for every letter. Because of this ancient system it was actually possible to count a persons name and to assign a number to a name. What John is telling us here in this Thirteenth Chapter of Revelation is that the letters of the Name or Title of the Beast will add up to 666.

What was the name recognized by the early Church?

"Lateinos has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution]" – Irenaeus [120-202AD] Against Heresies Book 5, Chapter 30.

"If, then, we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes Latinus (Lateinos)". – Hippolytus [170-236AD] Treatise on Christ and AntiChrist

The word LATEINOS has a total value of 666 ($L=30, A=1, T=300, E=5, I=10, N=50, O=70, S=200$ added together = 666) And the word Lateinos literal means the 'Latin Man'.

Who has been historically recognized as the 'Latin Man'?

Pope Vitallian earned the title “Latinus” when he issued the decree in 663 AD that Latin was the only language to be used in worship. The Church of Rome has since been called the “Latin Church”. The Latin Mass, which was performed throughout the world was seen by the Church as a mark of her universality. It was not until 1963 during the Second Vatican Council in its decree Sacrosanctum Concilium, that the Church of Rome allowed the translation of the liturgy and rites of the church from Latin into modern vernaculars. Today Latin remains the official language of the Roman Church.

“In Italy, Latin was originally the dialect of the region around Rome. It was the language of scholarship and diplomacy until the 18th century and of the Roman Catholic liturgy until the late 20th century [1963]... .The Roman Catholic church still uses Latin as the language of its official documents”. – Encarta Encyclopedia, Latin Language Article

The Mark of the Beast

According to Scriptures when this ‘image’ is completed it will pass laws [speak] that enforce false worship [Revelation 13:14-15]. Those who refuse will be killed. We find a foreshadowing of this in the Book of Daniel chapter three, where the King of Babylon made an image that represented his kingdom, and then ordered all men to bow down to it. Those who were faithful to Jehovah God refused to bow and were thus thrown into a fiery furnace. According to Revelation 13:16 those who bow to the image will receive a ‘mark’. Do you know what this ‘MARK’ means? It is a stamp (as a badge of servitude). Often landowners would mark their slaves like cattlemen branding their cattle. Their mark showed to whom they belonged.

The Seal of GOD

Let’s consider the Seal of GOD for a moment so that we can better understand the ‘mark of the beast’. When a person is truly saved God places his ‘brand’ or ‘seal’, which is his name upon their forehead [see Revelation 22:4, 7:3, 14:1, 9:4].

Everyone who is born again has God's name or his seal in their foreheads, this means they are his servants. They accept his word as their authority.

God's seal is of course invisible because it is by his Spirit. I cannot look upon another Christian and see his seal, and he cannot look at me and see my seal. But there is a way you can spot someone who has been sealed with the Holy Spirit. According to Christ we can know that someone is a Christian by their fruits [Matthew 7:20]. The greatest fruit of the Spirit is love, and Jesus said that love was the distinguishing mark of his disciples [John 13:35]. And according to the Bible our love for God and our brethren is made known by our obedience to his commandments [1st John 2:4, 5:3, Romans 6:16, Deuteronomy 6:4-8].

Notice how the Bible describes those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast:

**“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”
– Revelation 14:12**

May you never forget this dear reader, those who refuse to receive the mark of the beast are those who keep the Commandments of God and those who receive the mark of the beast are those who disobey God that they might render obedience to the Beast.

THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

As we have investigated the prophecies of Daniel chapters two and seven, along with Revelation twelve and thirteen I am certain that the reader has asked himself: “But when is the rapture?” Many preachers today assure their congregations that tribulation cannot come until the Church is raptured away. But as we have seen from our study of Revelation 12 and 13, which covers the history of the Church from the time of Christ's birth until the enforcement of the Mark of the Beast, that there is not a single mention of the ‘rapture’. But contrarily we have seen that the Church has been warned that the persecution of the anti-christ will indeed be against the Christians who refuse to yield to him [Revelation 13:7-8] and that many who refuse to

yield to the beast shall be put to death.

If we continue to follow the sequence from Revelation Thirteen into Revelation Fourteen, you will find that after this fierce tribulation, that Christ then comes for his Church, gathering into his barn the good fruit of the earth.

Revelation 14:14-16 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

After Christ harvests his children the rest of the world is thrown into the great winepress of GOD, that is his wrath, which is contained in seven vials [Revelation 14:19, 15:1]. This is the clear sequence of events as given in these Chapters. Let's now spend the remaining pages of this booklet setting forth the correct teaching of Christ's second coming.

BEHOLD HE COMETH!

The Apostles of Christ all believed and taught that the Lord Jesus Christ was coming again to this earth. Their messages were only the echoes of the words of Jesus himself. Christ repeatedly prophesied that he would come again, warning his followers to be watchful and ready for he said: "Behold, I come quickly [suddenly]" and "I will come... as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Revelation 22:7, 3:3

There is no surer promise in all of the Scriptures than the promise that Christ is coming again. This promise was the hope of the Saints of God two thousand years ago and it is still the hope of the Saints today. I am certain that if you are a Christian, that you to are looking forward to the coming of Christ. Because this precious promise is held almost universally by the Saints, we will not waste our time in defending the sure doctrine of the Second Advent in this booklet. No, this booklet is given for another reason, that is to examine the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in detail and to learn what manner of

coming it shall be. You see though most Christians agree that Christ is coming, the understanding of how Christ is coming is very varied. The author feels certain that some of the most popular doctrines about the coming of Christ are very unbiblical and even dangerous. Hopefully with the remainder of this small booklet we can establish the Biblical description of the Second Coming, while identifying the false doctrines that are widely being taught.

Before we begin our study let us pray the following prayer together: “Our Heavenly Father, we ask you to lead us into your word, and into all of your truth. We pray Father that you will give us the discernment that we so desperately need in these last days, so that we will not be deceived by the many false doctrines that are in the world. We pray Father that you will uncover any lie that we have believed and that you will show us the truth of the matter. Show us O God your ways, and we will with joy accept it and follow it, in Jesus name we pray. AMEN

What is the Rapture?

The word ‘Rapture’ is a Latin word that means to be *‘carried off’*, though the word is not found in the King James Version Bible, its English equivalent “caught up” is. In 1st Thessalonian 4:16-17 the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is described. These verses explain that Christ will descend from heaven, at which time the righteous dead shall be raised from their grave, and then they and the living Christians will be: “Caught up” or “raptured” in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So we see that the doctrine of the rapture is a Biblical doctrine, and it is contrary to the Bible to say that there will be no rapture of the Church. The question is not then “Shall there be a rapture?”, but rather “How shall the Rapture be?”

Will The Rapture Be in Secrete?

Many honest Christians believe that Christ is going to come back to this earth in two ways, one being in secret, the other visible. The former will be silent in which Christ comes to secretly rapture or remove His followers from earth before the

great time of trouble and tribulation occurs. Then after several years, the visible and literal appearing of Christ will take place.

There are many Bible texts regarding the second coming of Christ. But do any of these refer to a silent or secret return, or do they all speak about the same visible glorious event? Let us find out what the unerring Scriptures teach. Please take the time to read the following Scriptures carefully.

The apostle Paul reveals that the coming of Christ to this earth will be as follows:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Paul declared that when Christ should come for his Church, there would be a shout; a voice, a trumpet; the righteous dead would be resurrected, and along with the righteous living, would be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the clouds never to part again.

The Apostle John reveals that the coming of Jesus to this earth will be as follows:

Revelation 1:7 “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

John declared that when Christ should come, it would be with clouds, and every eye on the earth would miraculously see him, and all the kindreds of the earth who have rejected Him would wail. (*The Old Testament prophets also spoke of the Coming of Christ see Psalms 50:3-5, Jeremiah 25:30-33.*)

Christ Himself revealed what His coming to this earth will be like:

Matthew 24:30-31 "...then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Christ declared that when He returns to gather [rapture] his elect [his Church], it would be with a visible sign and with the sound of a trumpet; and all people on the earth would mourn when they see Him coming in the clouds!

All of the above Scriptures are in complete harmony with each other regarding what it will be like when Christ comes back to this earth in the last days. Signs will occur just prior to His arrival. Every eye on the earth, every person of every nation and tribe will see Him return in power and great glory; there will be great noise, a shout, a heavenly voice, and a great loud trumpet will sound; the righteous dead will be resurrected from their graves, and together with the living righteous will be caught up into the air to meet their Lord in the clouds. Notice there is absolutely nothing at all that indicates that Christ comes secretly!

The Thief in the Night Symbolism

So where do men find the "secrete rapture" doctrine? Most men base this doctrine upon the verses that teach that the coming of Christ will be like a thief in the night. ALL of the secrete rapture preachers use the following passage to confirm and or validate their secret rapture theories. They will always do the following, they will read to you...

1 Thessalonians 5:2, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

And They Stop!

Some refuse to read further, and rightly so. For if they read further a multitude of problems arise! For example, look at the next verse..

1 Thessalonians 5:3 "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Friends, as you can see the "Thief" in the night symbolism means: Unexpected, NOT Secret (*Also see 2nd Peter 3:9-10 to see how the analogy of the thief means unexpected not secret.*) And notice that this coming brings sudden destruction upon the wicked. These verses actually disprove the very doctrine that they are trying to teach. Now notice the next verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:4 "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

The "Secret rapture" preachers use the verses above this passage (verse 2) to say Jesus comes as a thief in the night for the Christians. But this verse (verse 4) proves they are not being honest with the Scriptures. This verse is plain and can be taken no other way. It says clearly that Jesus does NOT come as a thief in the night to the Christians. Why? Because we are children of light and we are sober and watching for his coming [see 1st Thessalonians 5:5-6].

One Taken One Left Behind?

But what about those Scriptures which talk of one being taken and the other being left behind; surely this backs up the belief in a secret rapture? Or does it? Let's read the verses in context:

Matthew 24:37-39 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Question: In the days of Noah, who were taken and who were left? The wicked were taken and the righteous were left.

He represented this also in Luke 13:35-36, which reads:

“Two women shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left”.

Now some teach that those who are left will remain alive and experience seven years of tribulation. Yet, according to the Scriptures it is those who are taken that are receiving the "trouble". Those who are 'taken' are those who are not prepared to meet the Lord when he comes, and they are taken in death, just like the wicked were taken in death when the flood came.

Notice the Apostles asked Christ where would those who were taken be?

"And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord?", then Christ answers "Wheresoever the body is thither will the eagles (Vultures) be gathered together" Luke 17:37.

Where will they be taken? According to Jesus Christ they will be taken in death and their bodies [carcasses] will be food for the birds, just as Revelation foretells [see Revelation 19:17-18].

Pre-Tribulation Rapture?

So we clearly see from Scriptures that Christ's Coming will not be a secret happening, but rather a miraculous, earth shattering event, that shall be witnessed by the whole world. But what about the belief that Christ will rapture all of His people off the earth before the time of trouble, tribulation, persecution, and the working of Satan with lying wonders? Is Jesus Christ coming to spare his Church from going through the tribulation? Is this the purpose of the Rapture?

The Bible is very plain that there is coming a time of great trouble to this earth, just prior to the second coming of Christ. In the Book of Daniel it is prophesied that: "there shall be a

time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation". According to Christ this time of trouble is going to threaten the very existence of life on earth [Matthew 24:22]. The question is not: "Shall there be a time of trouble?" but rather: "Shall Christ come before the time of trouble as many teach?" Let's begin in the Book of Daniel, where this time of trouble is predicted:

The prophet Daniel declared that "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was...And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12:1.

According to Daniel Christ's coming for his people is not before the time of trouble, but after it is started. The apostle John declared that God's righteous people who were living when Christ returned to earth would be those "which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:14.

Jesus said that he would send his angels to gather the elect "Immediately after the tribulation of those days" – Matthew 24:29-31

Did Jesus ask his Father to take us out of the world? No! Christ Himself prayed that His Father would not take His people "out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." John 17:15.

Saved From Wrath?

Some of the pre-tribulation preachers use the following verses to 'justify' their secrete rapture doctrine.

Romans 5:9, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

First we must understand the great tribulation is NOT the wrath of GOD. It is really the wrath of Satan upon this world and

especially upon God's Church. You may ask: Will God allow his Church to go through the tribulation? Why wouldn't he? God has always allowed His Church to be tried by the fires of persecution and tribulations, because fire purifies gold. Persecution only makes the true followers of Christ stronger. If you study the history of the Christian Church you will see that it has constantly been persecuted and troubled. Millions and millions of men and women have been tortured and killed for their faith in Jesus Christ, and it is said that the blood of the martyrs was like precious seed. In many nations of the world today Christians are suffering persecution. The reason the doctrine of a "pre-tribulation rapture" is so popular today in America is because the Church here is worldly, sinful and lazy. It is looking for a way of escape. It is seeking an easy form of Christianity. A form where you can claim to be a Christian, and yet live like the world. The Churches here want to reign with Christ, but they don't want to suffer for his name's sake. But I am telling you friends, if you are not willing to suffer for Christ, you will not reign with Christ! [2nd Timothy 2:12]. As Paul said: "... we must [go] through much tribulation [to] enter into the kingdom of God"— Acts 14:22. I am certain that none of us WANT to go through this time of trouble, but if we live we shall enter it. The only way to escape all of these things is to die in the Lord before they begin. As Job prayed:

“O that thou wouldest hide me in the
grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy
wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time,
and remember me!” – Job 14:13

One thing is certain we must stop putting our hopes in false doctrines, and starting preparing ourselves for this time of trouble.

The Time of Trouble is the Wrath of Satan.

In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul wrote: “For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation”— 1 Thessalonians 3:4. At whose hands does the Church suffer? The Bible teaches it is Satan who persecutes the follower of Christ.

Revelation 12:12-13 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [the Israel of God, the Church] which brought forth the man child.

The Tribulations is a result of the wrath of Satan against the followers of Jesus Christ. It is not the wrath of God. Notice: the wrath of GOD is contained in Seven Vials, which are poured out upon the wicked at the end of the tribulation of period.

Revelation 15:7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

What is the Purpose of the Rapture?

When you read Paul's explanation of the Rapture in 1st Thessalonians 4, from a historical perspective you quickly see that he is using imagery taken from the ritual practiced by the Roman Army of Paul's day. You see after the Roman Army conquered a far away land they would return victoriously to Rome. But when they got about a mile from Rome they would stop and camp; while messengers were sent into the City to announce that the army was victorious and was coming back. The Citizens would then leave the city and meet the Roman Army at their camp site and then, after they all were gathered together as one band, they ALL together would march into Rome. Both the army and the citizens of Rome shared in the glory of victory.

This is a perfect picture of the return of Christ, he is not coming back twice, he is coming back once as a Victorious King, but as he returns to the earth in the glory of the Father, which is plainly visible to the wicked world below, he pauses and calls for his Church; gathering his elect, both the dead and the living unto himself. Why? So that all of his people may share in his glorious return equally.

The question then arises: How long will they be in the air?

According to the Book of Revelations the next event that happens after the Church is harvested [Revelation 14:14-16], is the wicked world [the vine of the earth] is then cast headlong into the wrath of God.

Revelation 14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

In Noah's day the wrath of God fell for forty days in the form of an earth destroying rain, in this age the wrath is contained in seven vials which are poured out quickly, one after another. Thus I believe the Scriptures are teaching us that the wrath will fall for a relatively short season, a matter of days, not years. Isaiah tells us it is just for a "little moment" and for this time the Church is with Christ out of harms way.

Isaiah 26:20-21 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation [wrath] be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

During the pouring out of the wrath of God not one person on earth is saved, for the Bible says that no one repents [Revelation 16:9-11]. Remember dear reader, according to the very Word of Almighty God no one comes to repentance after the rapture, while the plagues are falling.

After the seven vials of wrath are poured out [these vials are described in Revelation Chapter 15, 16, 19], then we see Christ and the Saints, which includes those who got the victory over the Beast and his Mark, fully returning to the earth [Revelation 19:11-14, 20:4]. And upon the earth they live and reign one thousand years [Revelation 20:4, 5:10].

Seven Years of Tribulation? A Prophetic Twist on Daniel 9

Where does the doctrine of a seven-year tribulation come from?

The seven-year tribulation theory is based upon a misunderstanding, or deliberate re-writing of the prophecy in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel. Many take this prophecy out of context to explain a seven year(Pre-Trib) or three and a half year (Mid-Trib) time of great tribulation for the Christian believer. However, you will find by studying this prophecy that it does not speak of a time of tribulation at all. In fact, it speaks of a time that all believers both Old and New Testament alike hold very dear to their hearts. It is the prophecy that describes the coming of Jesus as the Messiah in 27AD, his death in 31 AD, and the Gospel going to the Gentiles in 34 AD.

It is sad that ‘pre-tribulation rapture preachers’, take the ‘he’ in Daniel 9:27, and say it is anti-christ, when it actually refers to Jesus Christ. It was Jesus who confirmed the covenant of promises to the Jews by both his Preaching and through his Apostles (Romans 15:8). It was Jesus who by his death, caused the significance of animal sacrifices to cease, in fact the veil that separated the inner rooms of the temple was ripped into at his death. By Israel’s constant rejection of the Gospel and their abominations, the Jewish nation has been left desolate.

This is the historic interpretation of this Scripture, which was upheld by the likes of Martin Luther, John Calvin and others. The 1599 Geneva Bible has the following in its footnotes concerning Daniel 9:27:

“By the preaching of the Gospel [Jesus] affirmed his promise, first to the Jews, and after to the Gentiles. Christ accomplished this [the cessation of the sacrifices] by his death and resurrection. [Jesus made it desolate] Meaning that Jerusalem and the sanctuary would be utterly destroyed because of their rebellion against God, and their idolatry.”

There is absolutely no reason to detach the last week and stick a 2000 year gap before it, nor is there any reason to apply it to Anti-Christ and the tribulation period.

WHERE DID THE SECRET RAPTURE DOCTRINE ORIGINATE?

As we have seen, the Secret Pre-tribulation doctrine is not found in the Bible. So where and when did it originate? You

may be surprised to learn that it wasn't until the early or mid 1800's that there was any significant group of believers around the world that looked for a "rapture" of the Church prior to a seven-year tribulation period. The "secrete rapture" teaching was NOT taught by the early Church, it was NOT taught by the Church of the first centuries, it was NOT taught by the Reformers, IT WAS NOT TAUGHT BY ANYONE (except a couple Roman Catholic theologians) UNTIL ABOUT THE YEAR 1830!

IT'S ORIGINS – The Roman Catholic Church had to come up with a view of prophecy to counter the Historic view of prophecy that the Reformers had used to identify the Church of Rome as the 'little horn' of Daniel 7, the Mouth of Revelation 13, and the Harlot of Revelation 17.

This new scheme of prophetic interpretation became known as FUTURISM. It was a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest named Ribera who, in the days of the Reformation, first taught that all the events in the book of Revelation were to take place literally during the three and a half years reign of the Anti-christ way down at the end of the age.

Later, Emmanuel Lacunza, also a Jesuit priest, built on Ribera's teachings, and spent much of his life writing a book titled "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty." Lacunza, however, wrote under the assumed name of "Rabbi Ben Ezra," supposedly a learned Jew who had accepted Christ as his Saviour; he did this so that the unsuspecting Protestants would accept his book; for the Protestant world then wanted nothing from a Jesuit. His book was published in 1812.

Now enter the name of Edward Irving. Born in Scotland in 1792, Irving discovered Lacunza's book and fell in love with it, translated it into English, and it was published in London in 1827. Then Irving began to hold Bible Conferences throughout Scotland, emphasizing the coming of Jesus to rapture His Church.

Later, J.N. Darby then was introduced to the "secrete rapture" doctrine by the Irvinites (Followers of Edward Irvin),

as well as the famous book by Rabbi Ben-Ezra [Jesuit priest Emmanuel Lacunza]. Darby was himself a prolific writer and from that time a constant stream of propaganda came from his pen. His writings on biblical subjects number over 30 volumes of 600 pages each. Darby developed and organized "futurism" into a system of prophetic teaching called "dispensationalism."

The Secret Rapture teaching was introduced into the United States and Canada between the 1840's and 1870's. A Congregationalist preacher by the name of C. I. Scofield came under the influence of Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. Scofield became a strong promoter of the teaching that had been promulgated by Darby, whom he considered "the most profound Bible student of modern times." He incorporated this teaching into his SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE. Three million copies were published in the first 50 years! Through this Bible Scofield shrewdly carried the teaching of the Secret Rapture into the very heart of Evangelicalism. Many of your modern Baptist Pastors rely heavily upon Scofield's teachings.

There is one final link in the chain of the development and spread of the rapture theory that should be mentioned in passing. Scofield and Darby influenced D. L. Moody, and Moody influenced the early PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT. How? you ask. The Assemblies of God is today by far the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world. In 1914 they ordered their Sunday School and study materials from the Moody Press. So the Assemblies of God believed what the Moody Bible Institute taught, which included the "Secrete Rapture". And so it is today, a great numbers of Churches have discarded the Historic Teaching of the Church concerning prophecy and have replaced it with a concept invented merely to deceive.

THE DANGEROUS LIE

Thus we see that from the pen of a few Roman Catholic Jesuits, the unbiblical doctrine of a "secrete pre-tribulation rapture" spread through out the United States of America. Yet there is one more twist to this diabolical doctrine that must be mentioned. This teaching also includes the doctrine of "post

rapture salvation”. Those who teach the erroneous doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture also teach that during the 'tribulation period' while the saints are in heaven, there will be many people 'born again', and saved. Now this is truly a contradiction of terms. These teachers tell us that when the Church is removed, the restraining influence of the holy Spirit is removed. Now if there are no preachers here and no convicting Spirit, how can anyone be saved? Simply, they cannot! During the pouring out of the wrath of God not one person on earth is saved, for the Bible says that no one repents [Revelation 16:9-11]. Remember dear reader, according to the very Word of Almighty God no one comes to repentance after the rapture, while the plagues are falling.

Oh dear reader do not let men deceive you into believing that after the rapture many will repent and come to Christ before he comes to the earth, for men cannot repent unless the Spirit draws, and the Spirit will not be striving with men during the wrath of God! What a false and lying hope that men have given the wicked.

Dear friend, if you are a sinner, without Christ, I urge you to come to Christ right now! If Christ comes and you are not ready to meet him you will die in your sins. When Christ comes for his Bride, those who are ready shall enter in and the door of mercy is shut, and those who are not saved, shall not be saved [Matthew 25:10-12]. Jesus said that it would be as in the days of Noah, those who were ready entered the Ark, and the door was shut. Those who were not ready were shut out, and they died in the world wide wrath of God. Thus it is best, dear friend, not to put your hopes into waiting until all the “Christians disappear” before you repent, nay, when Christ comes it will be much too late to pray. Be ye ready NOW is the word of God to you, for right NOW is the accepted time.

THE CONCLUSION

I hope that this booklet has stirred your interest in Biblical prophecy, and the historical interpretation of it. I pray that you not only have a better understanding of the Prophetic Scriptures but also a greater respect for the Holy Bible. The Word of God has proven its self to be perfectly accurate in its prophetic

predictions up to our day, and we can be certain that what remains shall certainly come to pass. Just as surely as the Roman Empire rose and then was divided, the Second Advent of Christ shall also come, and every aspect of Scriptures shall be fulfilled. These facts should cause us to search our own lives to see if we are ready to meet our God, for he has appointed every man a day to stand before him. Dear reader, have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? Have you repented of your sins and are you trusting purely in his finished work on the cross? If not, why not? God has proven himself true, His promises are all sure, and he has said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved".

Would you pray this prayer of repentance with me? "Dear God, I know that I am a sinner. I confess my sins before you. I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I believe he was punished for my sin and died in my place. I believe he was buried and I believe that you raised him from the dead and that today he is in heaven by your right hand. Therefore, I ask you to forgive me of my sins and to deliver me from them. I ask you Jesus to come and live in my heart by your Holy Spirit, and please enable me to live for you.

If you have believed in your heart and have sincerely repented, God assures you that you are saved. I urge you to find a local Bible preaching Church and ask the Pastor to Baptize you [Mark 16:16]. Read your Bible and pray daily. Attend Church regularly and seek to know Christ better every day. If this booklet has been a blessing to you, please contact us and let us know. We love to hear from God's children. Our contact information is on the back of this booklet. Thank you for your time, May God Richly Bless You.

Sincerely

Bro Martin Edm Blesse