

OUR ROOTS: A JET TOUR HISTORY OF THE CHURCH PART TWO: IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JOIN 'EM!

Jet Tour of Church History

Part Two
If you can't beat 'em, join 'em"

Constantine had a vision in which a flaming cross appeared in the sky with an inscription over it reading in Latin, "In Hoc Signo Vinces" - In This Sign Conquer!

He dedicated the battle to the Christian God (whose sign he believed he was shown) and upon victory became supreme ruler in the Western Roman Empire. Christianity had finally

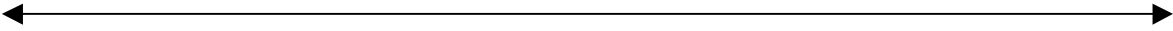
gained favor in high places.

In 313 A.D., Constantine issues the Edict of Milan which gives Christians the freedom to worship openly throughout the empire, putting the growing new religion on an equal plane with the popular pagan cults and practices that thrived there.

Suddenly, after more than two centuries of persecution unleashed on Christians by various Emperors, all Christians both "true and false", enjoy a new era of tolerance and acceptance throughout the empire. Unfortunately for "True Christians", it doesn't last long.

The first public evidence of a positive leaning towards the Christian religion he gave in his contest with the pagan Maxentius, who had usurped the government of Italy and Africa, and is universally represented as a cruel, dissolute tyrant, hated by heathens and Christians alike, called by the Roman people to their aid, Constantine marched from Gaul across the Alps with an army of ninety-eight thousand soldiers of every nationality, and defeated Maxentius in three battles; the last in October, 312, at the Milvian bridge, near Rome, where Maxentius found a disgraceful death in the waters of the Tiber.

Here belongs the familiar story of the miraculous cross. The precise day and place cannot be fixed, but the event must have occurred shortly before the final victory over Maxentius in the neighborhood of Rome. As this vision is one of the most noted miracles in church history, and has a representative significance, it deserves a closer examination. It marks for us on the one hand the victory of Christianity over paganism in the Roman empire, and on the other the ominous admixture of foreign, political, and military interests with it. We



need not be surprised that in the Nicene age so great a revolution and transition should have been clothed with a supernatural character.

The occurrence is variously described and is not without serious difficulties. Lactantius, the earliest witness, some three years after the battle, speaks only of a dream by night, in which the emperor was directed (it is not stated by whom, whether by Christ, or by an angel) to stamp on the shields of his soldiers "the heavenly sign of God," that is, the cross with the name of Christ, and thus to go forth against his enemy. Eusebius, on the contrary, gives a more minute account on the authority of a subsequent private communication of the aged Constantine himself under oath—not, however, till the year 338, a year after the death of the emperor, his only witness, and twenty-six years after the event. On his march from Gaul to Italy (the spot and date are not specified), the emperor, whilst earnestly praying to the true God for light and help at this critical time, saw, together with his army, in clear daylight towards evening, a shining cross in the heavens above the sun) with the inscription: "*By this conquer*," and in the following night Christ himself appeared to him while he slept, and directed him to have a standard prepared in the form of this sign of the cross, and with that to proceed against Maxentius and all other enemies.¹



JESUS WROTE TO SEVEN SO WE ALL WOULD HEAR!

There were many other churches at that time that would seem to be more historically significant than the seven that Jesus addressed: the churches at Jerusalem, Rome, Galatia, Corinth, Antioch, Colossae, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Miletus, to name a few. Why did Jesus select just these seven Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea? Simply because these seven represent four levels of His message.

- ⇒ **1st : JESUS GIVES A SPECIFIC MESSAGE:** First, "to the church at . . ." He spoke to the local churches that were in those geographic places then. Jesus still is interested in His local, geographic churches. He speaks to individuals by name, He knows what they are doing at church, at work and at home.
- ⇒ **2ND : JESUS GIVES A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE:** Second, "Hear what the Spirit says to the churches . . ." This is plural and speaks of an admonition to all churches throughout all the history of the church. Here Jesus addresses His divine expectations of all churches for all of history!

¹Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1997.

- ⇒ **3RD : JESUS GIVES A PROPHETIC MESSAGE:** Thirdly, Jesus was describing the seven types of Christians that would make up the visible church throughout all the church age. This is perhaps the most fascinating part of the book as Jesus describes with divine precision the seven successive eras the church would pass through from Pentecost to the last days of Apostasy.
- ⇒ **4TH : JESUS GIVES A SPIRITUAL MESSAGE:** Finally, “He that hath an ear, let him hear . . .” Note the singular “ear” this is the practical and personal message from Jesus to each of us, this may be the most valuable part of the entire book.

These letters describe the unfolding of all subsequent church history. In any other order, this prophetic panorama would not be true! These letters seem to be the explanation for the interval between the 69th and 70th "weeks" of Daniel 9. Just as the Book of Acts covers about 30 years of the growth and ministry of the church; the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Book of Revelation cover the next 1,900 years.

THE PROPHETIC MAP?	
EPHESIAN PERIOD	30 – 60 AD
SMYRNA PERIOD	60 – 300 AD
PERGAMITE PERIOD	300 – 500 AD
THYATIRAN PERIOD	500 – 1500 AD
SARDIAN PERIOD	1500 – 1800 AD
PHILADELPHIAN PERIOD	1800 – 1950 AD
LAODICEAN PERIOD	1950 ONWARD

THERE WILL BE SEVEN STAGES OF CHURCH HISTORY

CHRIST FADING FROM HIS CHURCH: The Church throughout the Ages: **SEVEN SUCCESSIVE STAGES²** IN CHURCH HISTORY.

For just a moment, let me give you a perspective- there are seven letters in Revelation 2 - 3 that give us the

church in prophetic perspective - the church from Christians ascension until He comes to take His church - from century one to the rapture. In the first place, the seven Churches represent seven phases or periods in the Church's history, stretching from the time of the apostles to the coming again of Christ, the characteristics of which are set forth partly in the names of these churches, but more fully in the epistles addressed to them.

- ✓ There was the Ephesian period--30-60 AD a period of warmth and love and labor for Christ, dating directly from the apostles, in which defection began by the gradual cooling of the love of some, the false professions of others and the incoming of undue exaltations of the clergy and church offices.
- ✓ Then came the Smyrna period--60 -300 AD the era of martyrdom, and of the sweet savor unto God of faithfulness unto death, but marked with further developments of defection in the establishment of castes and orders, the

² This material drawn from J.A. Seiss, The Apocalypse, pp.

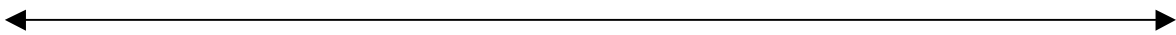
license of Judaizing propensities, and consequent departures from the true simplicities of the Gospel.

- ✓ Then followed the Pergamite period, 300-500 AD in which true faith more and more disappeared from view, and clericalism gradually formed itself into system, and the church united with the world, and Babylon began to rear itself aloft.
- ✓ Then came the Thyatiran period-- 500-1500 AD the age of purple and glory for the corrupt priesthood, and of darkness of truth; the age of effeminacy and clerical domination, when the church usurped the place of Christ, and the witness of Jesus were given to dungeons, stakes and inquisitions; the age of the enthronement of false prophetess, reaching to the days of Luther and the Reformation.
- ✓ Then came the Sardian period--1500-1800 AD the age of separation and return of the rule of Christ; an age of many worthy names, but marked with deadness within, and having much of which to repent; an age covering the spiritual lethargy of the Protestant centuries before the great evangelical movements of the last hundred years.
- ✓ Next was the Philadelphian period 1800-1950 AD is a time of great missionary fervor, evangelistic outreach and devotional godliness. in this time the world was penetrated with the gospel like no time since Pentecost.
- ✓ Which brings us to the Laodicean period, 1950 AD - present they is lukewarmness, self-sufficiency, empty profession, and false peace, in which the day of judgment is to find the unthinking multitude who suppose they are Christians and are not.

- ✓ So this period is the historic portrait of the era when the true Holy Catholic Church united with Roman paganism.
- ✓ It is the timeless portrait of any so called Christian who loves and joins in with unbelievers and in the world system.

It warns of the deadly sin of being in love and communion with that which God has condemned and will destroy.....G has told us there is only one action to take when confronted with worldliness and apostasy: SEPARATE FROM IT!

- ✓ 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

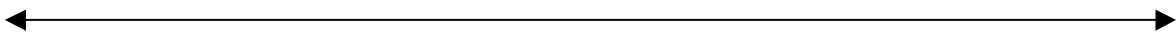


- ✓ James 4:4-8 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- ✓ 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (Remember how the Apostle John dealt with the infidel apostate Celsius? He ran out of the bath house when he was told Celsius was in there!)
- ✓ Revelation 18:1-4 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. 4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

LISTEN TO THE ADMONITION REVELATION 2:14-15

Christ said you are in sin “I have few things against you!”

1. First, you have BALAAM’S DOCTRINE = what is that?
 - ✓ “Put stumbling block...” Numbers 22-25 records how Moabites contacted Balaam prophet for hire, he prophesied 4x promising Israel’ s conquest of Moab and Christ’s coming, they angrily fired him and God killed 24,000 of Israel with a plague.
 - ✓ What? 24,000 Israel Yes, that’s the doctrine of Balaam, “If you can’t defeat it, join it and defile it and God will judge it”. Balaam said get them involved in sexual sin and God will judge them and did...
 - ✓ Balaam’s doctrine is still here -- people actually say they are Christians and live in sexual sin. And today if you are living in such sin and drawing in others, to you Christ says “I am coming to war against you”.



2. Second, NICOLAITANS, what's that? Nicolas supposedly started a cult but no record in church history. Many pastors through the centuries take this to be Nike-laos - conquered people.
 - ✓ Yes, self made prophets ruling with rods of iron, building ecclesiastical kingdoms of wealth and power---still with us sadly.
 - ✓ Just quickly aside - How did it happen? How did the pure, simple gospel get in purple robes with gold rings and set in paganism, idols and false work your way to heaven doctrines?
 - ✓ In short, it happened in 313 AD, 2 generals were fighting to take Diocletian's (persecutor of last week) kingdom. The place : Maxentius in East, Constantine in West.
 - ✓ One made a deal with some supernatural being and said if you help me win at a bridge over a river called Milvian, I'll make the empire Christian...he won and overnight the priests of pagan, Godless roman temples were part of the *New Roman Catholic Church*. The soldiers baptised, the old rituals renamed and everything was confused.

DID YOU KNOW SATAN ALSO HAS A CHURCH?

God had no sooner begun the blessed work in preparing for himself a people than the Devil did likewise. In fact, the first baby to be born on this earth later became Satan's original convert! In Genesis 4:8 we have what we could call the start of religion. Mankind trying to make his way to God by self effort. Infact the inspired commentary on his life says:

1 John 3:12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Also the next book Jude has similar warnings:

Jude 11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

- ✓ So we may say that Satan's church began officially at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9 which was the advent of what we would call *Organized Religion*. This was nearly 24 centuries B.C. Here, in the fertile plain of Shinar, probably very close to the original Garden of Eden, the first spade of dirt was turned for the purpose of Devil-worship.
- ✓ The first full-time minister of Satan was Nimrod, Noah's wicked and apostate grandson (Gen. 10:8-10). Secular history and tradition tell us that Nimrod married a woman who was as evil and demonic as himself. Her name was

Semerimus. Knowing God's promise of a future Savior (Gen. 3:15), Semerimus brazenly claimed that Tammuz, her first son, fulfilled this prophecy.

TWO BABYLONS?

Alexander Hislop³, the great 19th century historian traced the concept of false religions under the idea of Babyloniansism. From various ancient sources, it seems that Nimrod's wife, Semiramis (the First), apparently was high priestess of the Babel religion and the founder of all mystery religions. After the tower was destroyed and the multiplicity of languages developed, she was worshiped as a goddess under many different names. She became Ishtar of Syria, Astarte of Phoenicia, Isis of Egypt, Aphrodite of Greece, and Venus of Rome—in each case the deity of sexual love and fertility. Her son, Tammuz, also came to be deified under various names and was the consort of Ishtar and god of the underworld.

According to the cult of Ishtar, Tammuz was conceived by a sunbeam, a counterfeit version of Jesus' virgin birth. Tammuz corresponded to Baal in Phoenicia, Osiris in Egypt, Eros in Greece, and Cupid in Rome. In every case, the worship of those gods and goddesses was associated with sexual immorality. The celebration of Lent has no basis in Scripture, but rather developed from the pagan celebration of Semiramis's mourning for forty days over the death of Tammuz (cf. Ezek. 8:14) before his alleged resurrection—another of Satan's mythical counterfeits.

The mystery religions originated the idea of baptismal regeneration, being born again merely through the rite of water baptism, and the practice of mutilation and flagellation to atone for sins or gain spiritual favor. They also began the custom of pilgrimages, which many religions follow today, and the paying of penance for forgiveness of sins for oneself and for others.

Several pagan practices were especially influential in the church at Corinth. Perhaps the most important, and certainly the most obvious, was that of ecstasy, considered to be the highest expression of religious experience. Because it seemed supernatural and because it was dramatic and often bizarre, the practice strongly appealed to the natural man. And because the Holy Spirit had performed many miraculous works in that apostolic age, some Corinthian Christians confused those true wonders with the false wonders counterfeited in the ecstasies of paganism.

Mary was a woman of singular virtue, or she would never have been chosen to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. For that role she deserves respect and honor (cf. Luke 1:42). But she was a sinner who exalted God *her* Savior. She referred to herself as a humble bondservant to God, who needed mercy (cf. Luke 1:46–50). To offer prayers to her and elevate her to a role as coredeematrix with Christ is to go beyond the bounds of Scripture and her own confession. The silence of the epistles, which form the doctrinal core of the New Testament, about Mary is especially significant. If she played the important role in salvation assigned her by the Roman Catholic Church, or if she were to receive prayers as an intercessor between believers and Christ, surely the New Testament would have spelled that out. Nor do such Roman Catholic teachings as her virgin birth and bodily assumption into heaven find any biblical support; they are fabrications. The unbiblical elevation of Mary has its roots in paganism, some of it dating back to the tower of Babel and Nimrod's wife Semiramis. She, along with her son Tammuz, formed the basis for the many counterfeit mother-child cults of antiquity. The Roman syncretism of such pagan beliefs with Christianity led Catholicism to unbiblical teaching about Mary.

³ Adapted from Two Babylons quoted by MacArthur in Acts and I Corinthians. (For a discussion of the relationship of the pagan mother-child cults to Roman Catholic teachings about Mary, see Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* [Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1959].)

- ✓ Semerimus thereupon instituted a religious system which made both her and her son the objects of divine worship. She herself became the first high priestess. Thus began the mother-child cult which later spread all over the world.
 1. From Babylon it spread to Phoenicia under the name of Ashteroth and Tammuz.
 2. From Phoenicia it traveled to Pergamos in Asia Minor. This is the reason for John's admonition to the church of Pergamos in the book of Revelation: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is..." (Rev. 2:13).

Semiramis (the First)	Babel	Tammuz
Ishtar	Syria	Tammuz
Astarte (Ashteroth)	Phoenicia	Baal
Isis	Egypt	Osiris
Aphrodite	Greece	Eros
Venus	Rome	Cupid

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost writes, "Several years ago I visited an archeological museum in Mexico City. A recent find had just been put on display which Mexican archeologists had authenticated as belonging to the period about 200 years before Christ. The object was the center of religious worship among some of the early Indians in Mexico. To my amazement, it was an image of a mother with a child in her arms. This Babylonian religion spread abroad to become the religion of the world...."¹

Mystery Babylon Revelation 17

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Ishtar	Syria	Tammuz
Astarte (Ashteroth)	Phoenecia	Baal
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What was the teaching of Semerimus' satanic church? It was simply this, Semirimus was herself the very pathway to God. Infact, the title she took for herself was the "Queen of Heaven"!

Her claims were along these lines:

1. That she alone could administer salvation to the sinner through various sacraments, such as the sprinkling of holy water.
2. That her son Tammuz was tragically slain by a wild boar during a hunting trip.
3. That he was, however, resurrected from the dead forty days later. Thus, each year afterward the temple virgins of this cult would enter a forty-day fast (what we now know as Lent) as a memorial to Tammuz' death and resurrection.

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today*, p. 133.

4. After the forty-day fast, a joyful feast (see the origins of *Easter*) called Ishtar took place. At this feast colored eggs were exchanged and eaten as a symbol of the resurrection (see the reasons for modern Easter eggs and Easter bunnies?). Finally hot cakes marked with the letter T (to remind everybody of Tammuz) were baked and eaten! (see where the wafer of the host in Roman Catholic mass comes from?)

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO THIS MOTHER-CHILD WORSHIP

About 2000 B.C. God called Abraham away from all this.

Joshua 24:2-3 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.³ 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac, and led him into the Promised Land.

But by the ninth century B. C. Israel had returned to this devil worship under the influence of wicked Jezebel.

1 Kings 16:30-33 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him.³¹ And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.³² So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.³³ And Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

At this time the cult was worshiped under the name of Baal. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah warned against this hellish thing.

Jeremiah 7:17-18 "Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18 "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out libations to other gods in order to spite Me.

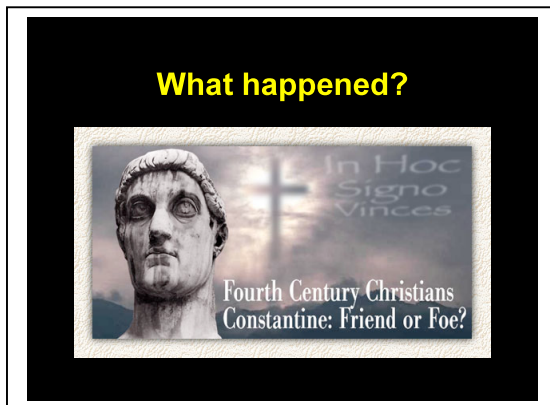
Jeremiah 44:17-19 "But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings and our princes did in the cities of Judah and in the

streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food, and were well off, and saw no misfortune.¹⁸ “But since we stopped burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and have met our end by the sword and by famine.”¹⁹ “And,” said the women, “when we were burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven, and were pouring out libations to her, was it without our husbands that we made for her sacrificial cakes in her image and poured out libations to her?”

Jeremiah 44:25 thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, as follows: ‘As for you and your wives, you have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled it with your hands, saying, “We will certainly perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her.” Go ahead and confirm your vows, and certainly perform your vows!’

Ezekiel 8:14 Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

By the time of Christ this cult had so influenced Roman life that the Caesars were not only crowned as emperors of Rome but also bore the title *Pontifex Maximus*, meaning, “high priest.” They were high priests of the Babylonian satanic church!



During the year A. D. 306 a Roman emperor named Constantine was threatened by a very powerful enemy army. Realizing that his uneasy troops needed confidence, Constantine claimed to have seen a vision on the eve of the battle. He saw a large blue flag with a red cross on it and heard a might voice which said *In hoc signo vinces* -- “in this sign conquer.” He thereupon marched his

troops into a shallow river, claimed them to be officially baptized, and ordered the sign of the cross painted on all his weapons. Thus inspired, he led his troops to victory and subsequently made Christianity the state religion of Rome.

The Roman priests of Tammuz soon discovered that they could easily make the transition into Christianity (with certain changes) and thereupon carried their traditions forward without interruption by promoting the Madonna-Child worship concept, the holy water sacrament, etc. For years the Roman Catholic popes have worn their well-known “fisherman ring.” This symbol can be traced back to

the Philistines, who worshiped the fish god Dagon (1 Sam. 5) along with Tammuz.

Thus for nearly 300 years the Devil had desperately attempted to destroy the church from outside by his terrible persecutions. But with the advent of Constantine he changed his tactics, walking the aisle, applying for membership, and joining the church! To this very day he holds his church letter! The corrupted church was already flourishing in Christ's day, and the Savior delivered a scathing attack against some of its very deacons and elders! See Matthew 23.

Remember the seven biblical reasons I can't ever be in the Roman Catholic Church.

1. The lie of The Mass
2. The lie of The role of Mary
3. The lie of Tradition over Scripture
4. The lie of Veneration (worship) of images
5. The lie of The false Sacraments
6. The lie of Purgatory
7. The lie to Paganism

THE APPEAL REVELATION 2:16

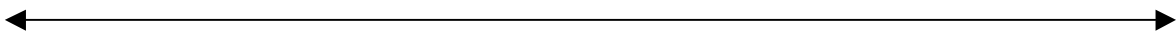
Finally now, the heart of the message this morning. Let's review the lessons we've learned.

- ✓ God can save - the vilest offender - even Pergamum or you.
- ✓ The same Word of God that saves, can damn the destiny of one who neglects to be saved.
- ✓ Watch out since Satan can't conquer you he will seek to defile you!

So what's the ultimate lesson? Well, the church at Pergamum had a problem...some had lost these vital birthrights of being born again. They had lost their PURITY, THEIR INTIMACY and THEIR NOURISHMENT. How? Because they got too close to the world by mixing with them, or marrying them, or loving the system.

So Jesus lovingly offers a solution to theirs and sometimes our woeful problems.

- ✓ If you have lost your purity - Christ says, Come back and I'll give you my white stone.
- ✓ If you have lost your intimacy - Christ says, Come back and I'll give you my new name.



- ✓ If you have lost your nourishment - Christ says , Come back and I'll give you my hidden manna.
- ✓ If you have lost your focus - Christ says , Come back and I'll give you my new ears, listen.

- ✓ So this morning do you want Christ's focus? Then go back to listening to Christ speaking to you in the word.
- ✓ So this morning do you want Christ Jesus to help you grow? Let Him start feeding you in His word.
- ✓ So this morning do you want Christ's intimacy? Let Him start drawing you to spend time alone with Him, He's waiting for you.
- ✓ So this morning do you want Christ's purity? Let Him wash and cleanse you and make you pure, as white as snow.

Note the Emphasis = *You must let Him do this today!*

SEVEN REASONS TO NOT WORK TOGETHER WITH ROMAN CATHOLICS

HOW CONSTANTINE STARTED THE ROMAN CHURCH

Well, the emperors had to do something about that. In 313 AD at the Milvian Bridge when Constantine beat his contender for the throne, He saw a vision. Now, watch out for people who see visions. Jeremiah 23:16 says:

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

“Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you.

They make you worthless;

They speak a vision of their own heart,

Not from the mouth of the Lord.

And things haven't changed much; they're still around. I mentioned them this morning. Usually they involve your pocketbook. You know, they always have a vision for your money. But he had a vision and he saw a big flaming red cross on a blue background and he saw the words “In Hoc signa Vinci”, isn't that interesting, it was in Latin. He understood Latin and he saw that and Constantine conquered at the Milvian Bridge by painting red crosses on all the shields of all

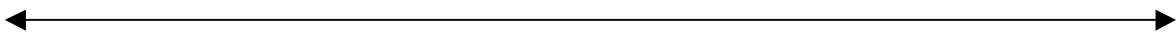
his warriors. Ah! Red Cross. Christ. Christianity. So that must be what happened. So he became a “Christian” [in quotes].

ALL THE ROMAN GODS MERGED WITH THE CHURCH

Well, what did he do with the State church? They had the Pantheon of Hadrian, they had all the priests of Dagon and the priests of Marduk and the priests of Phoenicia, Astarte and Baal. What do you do with Isis and Osiris and all that gang from Egypt and what do you do with Semiramis and Tammuz? What would you do with all the deities coming in from Persia? Mithras. He said, well, I have an idea...its religion, let's just all work together. Well, the church didn't like that too much but they accommodated the influx of paganism. Now up until that time the church was just what you see in the New Testament. They read the Bible, they broke bread, and they baptized people after they were saved. They didn't have anything to do with baptizing infants. They didn't have anything to do with prayers for the dead. They didn't have anything to do with Mass, Mass doesn't come around for 12 centuries. It was just simple house churches, breaking bread, fellowshiping, baptizing people, confessing Christ, preaching the Bible, praying and loving Jesus Christ. But here came all these religious priests of a pantheon of religions in 313 AD. They brought in their censors, that's incense burners, and they brought in their robes, and they brought in all their candles, and they brought in all their various beads that the pagans used.

Remember what Christ said in Chapter 6 of Matthew, don't pray mindless, rote prayers repeating the same thing endlessly over and over again thinking that God's going to hear you and bless you because of that. That's the first few verses of chapter 6. Well, here come the pagans with their prayer beads. Here they came with their cutting their hair in certain places, bald spots on top of their heads, which was a part of paganism. Here they came with their feasts to the Sun god, here they came with their feasts to the Love god and they came with their feasts of worshipping the death and resurrection in forty days of Baal. And they were confronted with what do we do with all this stuff. He said, Well, that one's close to Christmas, we'll put that one next the Christmas. That one's close to Easter, we'll put that by Easter. That one's over here, we'll put that there. Gradually, paganism seeped in.

The apostles, Peter, Paul, John, the early church, the simplicity, verse 3, that was in Christ, started to get complex. And it started evolving, and tradition became as powerful as scripture. And then it was more powerful than scripture. And the church got to the point, by 12th Century AD; they were so confused, that they believed they had to crucify Christ over again every day. That has persisted for centuries. So, when I talk about the Roman Catholic Church, I'm talking



about the church today that believes all that syncretism. Do you know what syncretism is? Religious syncretion is when you blend together the best of everything. Some New Age ideas, a couple of Hindu ideas, get a couple of Jewish ideas and through in a sprinkling of Christianity and you don't want to offend anybody. And that's why the RI National Council of Churches, which buys into that, sends out letters to clergy, like they did to me, that says that if you ever pray in public don't offend people by mentioning Jesus Christ. He's very offensive. Talk about the supreme power, the deity that they can worship at the Masonic Lodge or at AA or down at the B'hai Temple but don't bring up Jesus Christ; that's offensive. Do you know why? Because the preaching of the Cross is to those that perish foolishness and it offends them. It says in 1 Cor 1. And Paul says I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, it's the power of God and the only power of God until salvation. But that's been muddled over the years.

