

# *Finishing Well*

Lesson #38

Thyatira > Rise of the Catholic Church Sept. 27, 2023  
Medieval Church - Dark Ages - 590 AD - 800 AD

Rev. 2:18-25 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: <sup>19</sup> "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. <sup>22</sup> Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. <sup>24</sup> "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. <sup>25</sup> But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— <sup>27</sup> 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'— as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Note: This is Jesus' longest and most condemning letter.

What has happened? We have progressed from a synagogue of Satan in Smyrna to the throne and dwelling place of Satan in Pergamos to the depths of Satan in Thyatira! This period, known as the Dark Ages, will last almost 1000 years.

You will find in this church the Doctrine of Balaam, the Nicolaitans and the false teaching of Jezebel which is the depths of Satan. The Catholic Church became the most powerful institution during the medieval period. Kings, queens and leaders derived their power from an alliance with the Catholic Church which in turn gave them protection.

Christians have always lived in a world steeped in the spirit of Babylon which includes demonic influence + human rebellion. It is man-centered, embraces a spirit of "let us," and is enveloped in hidden idolatry in the heart. From the earliest of post-flood times up to the present, the world and its religions are all tainted by it. It has taken root so firmly in our everyday lives and has been disguised so cleverly, we are blind to the fact we are practicing paganism, even in our modern "Christian" church.

Babylon = Mentioned 260x in Bible Dwelling Place of Demons

Rev. 18:2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

- Satan has set up his dark agenda for the earth.
- He will raise up a throne for his Anti-Christ in the last days.
- Babylon is the result of apostasy against God's plan of salvation, the first international, political and religious ecumenical movement in the history of man, and one which has never ceased to exist in one form or another.

There seems to be two aspects or faces of Babylon.

- One is religious and is in existence today. One is political and commercial.
- Babylon embodies one great Satanic system.

What does Babylon represent in Scripture? It is clear that Babylon is the name for a great system of a counterfeit or pseudo religion. It is rooted in the satanic principle of offering a poor substitute for God's perfect plan. It is a combination of human rebellion and demonic activity. The "spirit of Babylon" motivates human organization and building with man at the head. It represents man's efforts to replace God with himself!

Babylon is man exalting himself to God, and even above God.

It is the root behind all the world religions trying to reach heaven by human effort.

We know the ancient city of Babylon was ruled by this occultic influence. When Babylon and its temples were destroyed, the high priest fled with a company of initiates and their sacred vessels and images to Pergamos, where the symbol of the serpent was set up as the emblem of the hidden wisdom. There the ancient cult was propagated under the name of the Etruscan Mysteries. Eventually Rome became the headquarters of Babylonianism.

When Christ came into the world the "mystery of iniquity" was everywhere "holding sway." Thus, when the early Christians [apostolic era] set out upon the great task of carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth, they found themselves everywhere confronted by this system, in one form or another; for though Babylon as a city had long been but a mystery,

➤ her mysteries had not died with her.

The church was born on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after the Lord Jesus ascended to God the Father in heaven [Acts 1-2]. For close to two thousand years since its birth, the church has been in the process of being built. Church history is the record of the construction. It is an important record because it reveals what happens when the church is led in the right direction and the disastrous results when it is led astray.

In 117 AD, the Roman Empire encompassed about 2.5 million square miles.

All power came from one centralized place.

In 395 AD, the Roman Empire divided into an eastern leg and a western leg with Emperor Diocletian and Emperor Maximian, respectively.

In 476 AD, the western leg fell to Germanic tribes.

In 1453 AD, the eastern leg of the Roman Empire fell.

Satan is known for his exploits in counterfeiting the things of God. His plan has always been to usurp the throne of God. So great is his pride, he has imitated the very ideas of God and has sought to win over as many of God's creatures' souls as he can through this great deceit.

The Apostolic era ended in a general, systematic persecution of believers by the world system of the day. From 101 AD - 313 AD, Smyrna was the persecuted church. That persecution ended abruptly when the church suddenly found itself befriended by a pagan Roman emperor, bringing the church under the protection of and into cooperation with the political power of that time. Constantine opened the door to:

    false doctrine creeping into the church and a false system of worship put in place.

In the early centuries of the church in Rome, incredible confusion arose; attempts were made to combine some of the features of the mystery religion of Babylon with the Christian faith, a confusion which has continued down to the present day.

When Constantine became Emperor of the Roman Empire in 313 AD, paganism was "baptized" and Satan joined the church. Pagan practices and idol worship began their poison corruption of the church. During this period, the church of Pergamos compromised and accepted the teachings of the Doctrine of Balaam. This led to accepting the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans which Jesus hated. Stumbling blocks, snares and traps were being laid to entice God's people to sin against Him and incur His anger. A religious "elite" clergy was developed who lorded over the people. A doctrine of a "license to sin" was being proclaimed.

It is likely Constantine was an instrument of Satan to carry out a diabolical plan of destruction of the church from the inside out. His edicts, which caused the marriage of church and state, were the worst thing that could happen to the church.

Quote: Christianity became the established religion in the Roman Empire and took the place of Paganism. Christianity as it existed in the Dark Ages might be termed Baptized Paganism. Confusion and compromise were the obvious fruits of the Pergamos church age.

During the early centuries of the church's history, the mystery of iniquity had an astounding effect on the church. The Babylonian practices and teachings were largely absorbed by the church of Christ. The truth of the Holy Scriptures on many points had been wholly obscured, while idolatrous practices had been foisted upon the people as Christian sacraments.

The heathen philosophies took the place of gospel instruction. Thus the "mystery system" which dominated Europe for a thousand years was developed. [Dark Ages > Church of Thyatira] It trafficked in the bodies and souls of men, until the great Reformation of the 16th century brought in a measure of deliverance.

What had been a "synagogue of Satan" in the church of Smyrna became the "seat of Satan" in Pergamos. As we enter the years of the Dark Ages, the church of Thyatira will plunge into the "depths of Satan."

Philip Mauro: "Our view is that in this letter to Thyatira we are given to see the inception of that masterpiece of satanic deception, that monstrous heresy, whose fullest development has been manifested in Romanism."

Seiss says: "Then came the Thyatira period- the age of purple and glory for the corrupt priesthood, and of darkness for truth. The age of effeminacy and clerical domination, when the Church usurped the place of Christ, and the witnesses of Jesus were given to dungeons, stakes and inquisitions; the age of the enthronement of the false prophetess, reaching to the days of Luther and the Reformation."

During this time, the Roman Catholic Church nearly strangled the life out of Christ's true church. No one was allowed to read or be educated except the priests of the Roman Church. Papal authorities ruled over the church. The Church became a political institution and gave itself a power greater than that of the kings. Christianity was plunged into an unprecedented spiritual darkness. The traditions of men took the place of the truth of God. The Pope's decrees replaced the doctrine of God. The Canon Law, law of the church, had its own courts. If you disobeyed the Canon Law, you could be excommunicated. Thus, you cannot receive the sacraments (baptism, eucharist, confirmation, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, matrimony). The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ and give worship to God. If you don't receive these, you will go to hell; you cannot receive a Christian burial; you will be rejected by other Christians. Sacraments were substituted for salvation. Rituals were replacing redemption. The vital doctrines of Biblical Christianity had almost disappeared.

It has been noted by many writers that the iniquitous and pagan rites of Babylon crept into the early church and were largely responsible for the corruptions incorporated in Roman Catholicism from which Protestantism separated itself in the Middle Ages.

The chief priests of the Babylonian cult wore crowns in the form of the head of a fish, in recognition of Dagon the fish god. They had the title "Keeper of the Bridge," that is, the "bridge" between this life and the next, imprinted on the crowns.

The Roman equivalent of the title, *Pontifex Maximus*, was used by the Caesars and later Roman emperors, and was also adopted as the title for the bishop of Rome. In the early centuries of the church in Rome, incredible confusion arose; and attempts were made to combine some of the features of the mystery religion of Babylon with the Christian faith, a confusion which has continued down to the present day.

All were required to bow to the pope, "venerate" (worship, revere) Mary and the saints, cherish the icons of the church, and express unconditional faith in all of the doctrines of the church, regardless of how unscriptural or antithetical to the true practice of New Testament Christianity they may be.

The Scriptures were deemed to be the *possession* of the church and were to be "handled" only by the bishops and priests, the Nicolaitans. Dissenters were dealt with quickly and brutally. Anyone found with so much as a single page of Scripture in their possession stood in peril of torture or death.

The Scriptures were not to be preserved but destroyed and burned.

Had a man from Mars been able to pay periodic visits to the earth during these centuries, he would probably have said that Christianity was doomed. In A.D. 500 Christendom was almost completely identified with the Roman Empire. The winning of the allegiance of that realm by Christianity and the growth of the Catholic Church and the bodies which dissented from it had been two of the most remarkable developments in the history of religion.

## Rome's Theology Before The Reformation - Entrenchment of The Roman Catholic Church -Latin-Teutonic Church 590-800 AD

### I. Infallibility of the Pope

In A.D. 590, the pope was formally recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, as Jesus Christ's co-ruler on earth. The pope said, "I am the judge of all, I am judged by none."

Why was this done? Remember, the Romans were caught up in emperor worship.

The Catholic Church said, you want to worship a man, we'll give you one!

As early as 590 AD, Gregory the Great called himself "the servant of servants," believing he was supreme among all bishops. Gregory believed in the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church. There was no salvation outside of this religious organization.

Church tradition equals the authority of the Bible.

Heresy Introduced: (1) He transformed the bishopric of Rome into a papal system.

(2) He formalized ritual and placed great emphasis upon the altar and a re-sacrificing (transubstantiation) of Christ in the mass. (3) He pushed the concept of purgatory.

(4) He gave impetus to the worshiping of saints and martyrs.

(5) In blatant disregard to the Word of God, he enforced celibacy of the clergy and said the priest wear long, flowing robes.

### II. Salvation in the Roman Catholic Church Only

Rome taught: All who did not acknowledge (1) the pope as God's representative on earth and (2) the Roman Catholic Church as the only true church were damned.

Salvation was confined within the teachings of the Roman Church. Every person who disagreed with the Roman Church was in line for a heresy trial and perhaps excommunication which meant the loss of one's soul.

III. Salvation by Works Salvation was not caused by God's grace through a supernatural new birth, but by assent to Roman Catholic dogma and practice. Faith was not trust in Christ for salvation, but submission to the church. The Roman Catholic Church stressed external actions, legal observance and penitential works. Man actually gained heaven by his works.

System of Penance. From a "works" theology flowed the idea of penance > Do certain external acts to prove the reality of their faith. At first penance consisted of certain public expressions of repentance for people involved in scandal, but it was soon extended to every sin, even to the most secret. Penance was considered as sort of a punishment. One must submit to the punishment to obtain the forgiveness of God through the priest's absolution.

"Great importance was soon attached to external marks of repentance --to tears, fasting, and mortification of the flesh.

Inward regeneration of the heart, which alone constitutes a real conversion, was forgotten.

"Since confession and penance are easier than the abandonment of vice, many ceased contending against the lusts of the flesh, and preferred gratifying them at the expense of a few mortifications."

IV. Complete Sanctification Rome taught sinless perfectionism. God was said to infuse grace and transform the sinful nature. "Rome held out to men the possibility of becoming pure and sinless saints (ontological perfection). Those who attained this perfection reached sainthood and were qualified to enter heaven at the hour of death. Those who did not become perfect and absolutely sinless in the flesh would need to go to purgatory after death and thus be made completely just and qualified to enter heaven" ("The Great Issues of the Reformation," Present Truth).

V. Worshiping of Saints The more a person practiced external works, the more saintlike he became and the closer he came to heaven. Some men, who were good enough to be called saints, lived lives advanced in holiness beyond what was required of them. Many were worshiped by the Roman Catholic Church and became mediators between God and man.

"Prayers were made to them; their aid was invoked in all the sorrows of life; and a real idolatry thus supplanted the adoration of the living and true God"

(J. H. Merle D'aubigne, History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, 1848).

VI. Exaltation of the Clergy The doctrine of sinless perfectionism strengthened the position of the Roman hierarchy. The clergy, thought to be more holy than the average people, were special channels of the grace of God. Thus, the clergy had the authority from God to dispense God's grace.

VII. System of Indulgences: A system of exchange whereby the priests employed their special rapport with God to perform certain religious acts for laymen.

For a price, Clergy would pray, fast and read scripture for a person.

This developed into buying up time one might have to spend in purgatory.

The origin of the Catholic Church is the tragic compromise of Christianity with the pagan religions that surrounded it. Instead of proclaiming the gospel and converting the pagans, the Catholic Church "Christianized" the pagan religions and "paganized" Christianity.

By blurring the differences and erasing the distinctions, the Catholic Church made itself attractive to the idolatrous people of the Roman Empire. Two results were:

- The Catholic Church became the supreme religion in the Roman world for centuries.
- The most dominant form of Christianity apostatized from the true gospel of Jesus Christ and the true proclamation of God's Word.

The reason the Papacy stands out is that it has ruled for such a long period of time over such a large area, exercised so much power, and claimed divine prerogatives for its persecutions. The magnitude of the persecutions is important for the following reason: One can excuse a few thousand cases as exceptional, but millions and millions of victims can only be the result of a systematic policy, thereby showing the harmful results of church-state unions.

"From the birth of Popery in 606 to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than fifty million of the human family, have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors, an average of more than forty thousand religious murders for every year of the existence of popery." - "History of Romanism," New York: 1871

"Salvation, taken from the hands of God, fell into those of the priests, who set themselves in the place of our Lord. Souls thirsting for pardon were no more to look to heaven, but to the Church, and above all to its pretended head. To these blinded souls the Roman pontiff was God. Hence the greatness of the popes - hence unutterable abuses." [D'aubigne]

It astounded John to see this great Mystery Religion still present at the end of the Ages, having been present as an enemy to the Gospel of Jesus Christ all of these years!

Babylon and the Harlot - When the angel told John he would tell him the "mystery of the woman riding the beast," he meant the Harlot, the false religious system, would have as its main teachings the same occultic practices as ancient Babylon. It would include black magic, demon contact, séances, miraculous materializations, witchcraft, astrology and sorcery.

Many believers have & will be martyred by those who perpetrate this false mystery religion. History supports this & will continue to do so until the last days when God destroys the harlot.

Millions of men and women refuse to face up to the fact that religion, in and of itself, is not enough for the sinner's need. It is amazing how many things religious people want to do to you. They can start with infant baptism and end up with the last rites when you are 108 years old- and all of that time they will manipulate you, maul you and sweet-message your soul. When it is all done you are just what you were. You are just a decorated and massaged sinner-a sinner who did not eat meat, or on the other hand, a sinner who did eat fish! When religion has done all it can, you are still a sinner who either went to church or did not go to church. Religion can put us on the roll and educate us and train us and instruct us. But after all that, there is still something within our beings that cries, "Eternity is in my heart and I have not found anything to satisfy it!" Only our Lord Jesus Christ is enough to satisfy the eternal longing in our souls.

*A. W. Tozer Sermon: Failure of Religion*