

Protestants have historically identified the pope or Catholicism as the antichrist. Founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther, said, "I know that the pope is antichrist" (D'Aubigne, b. 6, ch. 9). In the October 31, 1999 Newsweek, Kenneth Woodward wrote, "Martin Luther was the first to identify the papacy as such with the Antichrist... a view that was to become dogma for all Protestant churches." "Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Cranmer; in the seventeenth century, Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible... Sir Isaac Newton, Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards; and more recently Spurgeon, Bishop J.C. Ryle and Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones; these men among countless others, all saw the office of the Papacy as the antichrist" (Michael de Semlven, All Roads Lead to Rome, Dorchester House Publications, p. 205. 1991).

The question we must ask today is, did these Protestant reformers have any basis for the claim that the pope or the Catholic Church is antichrist. In order to find out, all we have to do is compare the antichrist prophecy with the pope and the Catholic Church to see if they match, starting with the writings of Paul who says the end "will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed" who "sits as God in the temple of God," or the church (2 Thes. 2:3). Paul says a "falling away" from the truth would take place within the early Christian church which would give rise to the man of sin, or antichrist. This "falling away" would result in the warning, "Babylon is fallen" (Rev. 14:8). Now let's look at Babylon.

In Revelation 17:3, Babylon is referred to as "a woman sitting on a scarlet beast." In order to identify Babylon, we must ask ourselves what a woman is a symbol of in the Bible. All through the Bible, God refers to the church as a woman (Jer. 6:2; Isa. 51:16). In the Bible a good woman, or wife, is symbolic of a good church (Eph. 5:23; 2 Cor. 11:2; Matt. 25:1). A

bad woman, or harlot, is a symbol of a bad church (Eze. 23:5).

The next thing we must do is identify what the beast represents, that the woman is riding. In the book of Daniel, the prophet has a vision of four beasts. He is told that the "beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth," and "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth," so a "beast" is a symbol of a king or "kingdom on earth" (Dan. 7:23).

Evidently, this woman sitting on a beast is symbolic of a church controlling a kingdom. Those familiar with history know this is exactly what happened in the early church. After the conversion of Constantine, Christians mingled with Rome, uniting with the pagan empire. As Rome fell, the Catholic Church then took control of the world during the Christian era. No longer did Rome control the church, but the church controlled Rome, as prophecy foretold.

In the Bible, God's people were called harlots when they mingled with pagan nations. God said they "committed harlotry with the Egyptians" and "played the harlot with the Assyrians" (Eze. 16:26, 28). Babylon is also called a "harlot... with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication" (Rev. 17:1, 2). Again, this perfectly describes the case of the Catholic Church when they united with Rome to become the "Roman" Catholic Church!

In addition, we are told the woman has a cup full of "the filthiness of her fornication" (Rev. 17:2, 4). Since her fornication is a symbol of her union with Rome, the filthiness resulting from her fornication must be the false doctrines that came into the church as a result of her union with Rome, like purgatory, penance, prayers to saints, papal infallibility, priestly celibacy, priestly confession, the sale of indulgences, the Immaculate Conception, and more.

Still, the proverbial nail in the coffin, or smoking gun, is yet to come. The prophecy

tells us Babylon is not just a woman, but a "mother," which means babies come out of her (Rev. 17:5). Ironically, the Catholic Church calls herself the "mother church" because she was the first Christian church. She has referred to Protestants as her children because Protestant churches came out of her. It is also ironic that Babylon is wearing the colors "purple and scarlet" (Rev. 17:4), colors that were traditionally worn during the sacred ceremonies of the Catholic Church.

Besides being a woman and a mother, Babylon is also called a city. The prophecy calls her a "great city" that sits on "seven mountains" or hills (Rev. 17:18, 9). The reason Babylon is not only a church but also a city distinguished by seven hills is that this church is also a kingdom, or political power, which rules over a city of seven hills. After accepting Christianity, Constantine donated the city of Rome to the church, which is why the Catholic Church still owns Vatican City in Rome. Ironically Rome, where the Catholic Church is located, has been historically referred to as "the city of seven hills," perfectly fulfilling the prophecy. Still, there is more incriminating evidence.

The prophecy says, "I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:6). The prophecy predicted the rise of a persecuting church. As predicted, after Catholicism rose to power, all who refused to follow her teachings were persecuted and violently. The church ignited the Inquisition, the crusades, and other horrible atrocities against Christians who refused to follow her false teachings, as recorded in Foxes Book of Martyrs. It is estimated that over fifty million were killed by the church, as also predicted by Jesus, who said: "the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2).

The prophecy so clearly identified the Catholic Church as the antichrist that Eugen Weber, on page 77 of Apocalypses, writes, "By 1641, a clergyman could be denounced to Parliament for declaring that the pope was not Antichrist." Denial of the Catholic antichrist was once taken as seriously as holocaust denial is now taken in Germany! Still, in spite of the evidence, Protestants now reject the teaching of the founding fathers and deny the claim that Catholicism is the antichrist. Protestants are now reaching out to Rome, trying to reunite with the mother church. As a result, prophecy tells us that these Protestant churches also become harlots, which is why Babylon is not only referred to as a mother, but a "mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:5). Since women are symbols of God's church, the daughters of Babylon that also become harlots represent churches that came out of Catholicism, as beautifully illustrated in Ezekiel 16:1-15. While the Protestant churches started out pure when they separated from the Catholic Church, the prophecy says they will become harlots when they seek to unite with the mother church.

Prophecy says the antichrist will again rise up. We are told that all nations will be "of one mind, and give their power and authority to the beast" (Rev. 17:13). When the Catholic Church again rises to power, as prophecy declares, and "all the world" follows after the beast, then the same persecution that marked the middle ages will rise again as the pope institutes the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:3). While this has all been long foretold in Bible prophecy, tragically, the majority of the world will not see it happening because they have lost sight of the antichrist.

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Identifying the Antichrist



