

A New Look at the Books of Revelation & Daniel End-Time Prophecies

**Part 6: The Man of Lawlessness & the Apostasy –
Emperor Constantine & the Roman Church**

Introduction 3

Jesuit Origin of Future Antichrist Interpretation 4

Papal Rome: Little Horn and Healed 6th Head 5

I. Constantine – The Man of Lawlessness 5

 What is the Meaning of Apostasy? 5

 The Man of Lawlessness, the Son of Destruction 6

 Mystery of Lawlessness Working from the Beginning 7

 Rome’s Church Replaced God’s Appointed Times and Law 8

 Roman Bishops Replaced True Biblical Passover 9

 Constantine as Head of Roman Church Replaced Biblical Passover 10

 True Believers a Sect of Judaism, Not a New Religion 12

 Constantine – The King Who Exalted Himself above God 13

 Constantine’s God – The Sun God, Not the True God 14

 Sun-God Pagan Holidays Adopted by Constantine’s Roman Church 18

 Constantine’s Vision of the False Sun-God Christ 19

 The Pagan Origin of the Chi-Rho Sign 20

 Constantine – “No Regard for the Desire of Women” 23

 Constantine’s God – “A God of Fortresses” 27

 Constantine “Takes His Seat in the Temple of God” 28

 The True Temple of God 29

 Constantine Takes Control of the Christian Church 29

 Constantine “Displaying Himself as God” 31

 The Holy Spirit Is the Restrainer 31

 Satanic Activity Associated with Constantine & Rome’s Church 32

 Future Judgment and Destruction of Rome 34

II. Constantine & the Healed 6 th Head of the Beast	35
Papal Rome Is the Healed 6 th Head of the Beast	35
Papal Rome’s Rise as a Sovereign Worldly Power	37
III. Why the Roman Church Is the Apostasy	41
The Word of God Is the Supreme Authority, Not Unbiblical Papal Traditions	41
Messiah Yeshua Is Head of the True Church, Not the Pope	44
Messiah Yeshua Is the Rock Upon Which His True Church Is Built, Not Peter	45
The Apostle Peter Was Not the First Bishop/Pope of Rome	48
God’s Holy Spirit Is the Only Infallible Authoritative Teacher, Not the Roman Catholic Magisterium	50
Sacramental Salvation Is a “Different Gospel” Replacing True Biblical Salvation	53
Messiah Yeshua Is the Only Mediator Between Man and God	57
Priesthood of All Believers, Not the Roman Priesthood	58
Roman Catholic Eucharist Is “Another Jesus”	58
Pagan Holidays Replaced God’s Biblical Holy Days	61
The Biblical Calendar	62
The Appointed Times of the Lord – God’s Prophetic Timetable and Pattern	62
Yeshua’s Fulfillment of the Appointed Times of the Lord	63
Satan’s Replacement of Biblical Holy Days with Pagan Holidays	64
Second Commandment Forbids Religious Images	65
Worship of the Goddess Transformed into Marian Devotion	67
Satanic Apparitions Masquerade as Roman Catholic Mary	69
God Condemns Worship of the Queen of Heaven	71
Pagan Origin of the Rosary	72
Prayer to Dead “Saints” Forbidden by God	74
Purgatory Is Not in the Bible	76
Celibate Priesthood Is Unbiblical	78
Pagan Origin of Relics That Are Unclean To God	79
References	81

A NEW LOOK AT THE BOOKS OF REVELATION & DANIEL END-TIME PROPHECIES

By Peter and Christie Michas

Messengers of Messiah

7231 Boulder Avenue Box 164, Highland CA 92346 USA

Tel. 909-425-8751 - www.messengers-of-messiah.org

Copyright 2012 Peter and Christie Michas

This publication may be freely copied and distributed provided it is copied in total with no alterations or deletions. The authors' names, ministry name and website address, mailing address and telephone number, and copyright notice must be included. No charge may be levied on recipients of distributed copies. Brief quotations may be embodied in critical articles and reviews without breaching copyright. This publication is available for free at Messengers of Messiah's website (<http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org>).

PART 6

THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS & THE APOSTASY – EMPEROR CONSTANTINE & THE ROMAN CHURCH

The apostle Paul warned about the coming of the Man of Lawlessness who would establish the Apostate Church (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In this study, we will show that Roman Emperor Constantine the Great fits the prophetic picture of the Man of Lawlessness in every detail. We will also prove from the Word of God that the Roman Church established by Constantine is the Apostate Church (Apostasy).

JESUIT ORIGIN OF FUTURE ANTICHRIST INTERPRETATION

During the Protestant Reformation, the reformers correctly identified the Roman Church as the Apostate Church Paul warned about (2 Thessalonians 2:3). They correctly identified the Roman Papacy as the Antichrist head of the false religious system of the Beast (Revelation 13 & 17). In response, the Roman Papacy mounted the Counter-Reformation and a Jesuit priest by the name of Francisco Ribeira (Ribera) developed the concept of the future Antichrist:

Francisco Ribeira, a Spanish Jesuit, is known to have originated this approach to Revelation in 1585 for the purpose of refuting the historicist view, and the [Protestant] Reformers' insistence that the "beast" was the papacy. Ribeira taught that the "Antichrist" had not yet come and would be an individual arising "in the last days." Protestants rejected this view for over 200 years, but it was finally introduced in Protestant circles by Samuel Maitland in 1827 and popularized in the works of J. N. Darby, the founder of dispensationalism, beginning in 1830 (emphasis in capitals added).¹

Francisco Ribeira wrote a 500-page commentary on the Book of Revelation, proposing that the Antichrist would rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, be received by the Jews, proclaim himself God, kill the Two Witnesses, and conquer the world.² For over 200 years, Protestants wisely rejected this false interpretation. However, the error was eventually picked up and has since spread widely, as well as been popularized by books and movies. Like so many believers, we also accepted this interpretation until the Lord guided our study to show us the error.

As we have shown in Parts 1 through 5 of this study, the 70th Week of Daniel has already been fulfilled. The covenant of Daniel 9:27 is the New Covenant established by Messiah Yeshua, not a future false peace treaty made by the Antichrist with Israel. This means that there is no future Antichrist who will rule the world during a future seven-year Tribulation. This also means that

¹ Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views – A Parallel Commentary*, p. 42.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_Ribera

the Temple will not be rebuilt until after Israel's enemies are destroyed at the time of Messiah Yeshua's Second Coming.

PAPAL ROME: LITTLE HORN AND HEALED 6TH HEAD

Previously, we showed that the Little Horn of Daniel 7 (verses 8, 11, 20-21, 24-26) represents Papal Rome. The 6th Head of the Beast, representing Rome and the Western Roman Empire, appeared to be to have been "slain", representing the fall of Rome in AD 476. But the "fatal wound" was "healed", representing Papal Rome's rise to great power (Revelation 13:3).

The Little Horn/Papal Rome "intended to change God's times and law" (Daniel 7:25) by replacing God's Biblical Holy Days with pagan holidays and replacing Biblical doctrines with unbiblical Papal doctrines. The Little Horn/Papal Rome also persecuted and killed true believers ("saints") who would not submit to its authority (Daniel 7:21, 25).

Now we will show that Roman Emperor Constantine is the Man of Lawlessness who Paul warned would establish the Apostasy, the Apostate Roman Church. Constantine claimed to be a Christian and stopped persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. However, the form of Christianity that he legalized was not true Biblical Christianity, but an apostate form of Christianity corrupted by paganism.

I. CONSTANTINE – THE MAN OF LAWLESSENESS

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF APOSTASY?

The apostle Paul warned about the Apostasy that would take place before the return of Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus).³

³ The Hebrew name *Yeshua* is the shortened form of *Yehoshua* (Joshua), meaning "YHVH is salvation". YHVH (*Yehovah*) is the name of God. Messiah (Hebrew: *Mashiach*) means "anointed" (Greek: *Christos*, or Christ). *Yeshua HaMashiach* means "Yeshua the Messiah".

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus [Yeshua] Christ [Messiah], and our gathering together to Him [Catching Up/Rapture], that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord [Second Coming] has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, **for it [Yeshua's Second Coming] will not come unless the apostasy comes first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, emphasis added).

The Greek word *apostasia* (Strong's #646) translates as "apostasy", meaning to abandon one's beliefs. The King James Version (KJV) translates the word as "falling away", in this context meaning to fall away from the true Word of God, the true Gospel of salvation in Messiah Yeshua.

Paul's warning was about the rise of the Apostate Church of Rome, the religious system of the Beast, which became established as the only legal religion of the Roman Empire, the 6th Head of the Beast. (See below: "III. Why the Roman Church Is the Apostasy" for a detailed study of the unbiblical doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.)

THE MAN OF LAWLESSESS, THE SON OF DESTRUCTION

Paul links the Apostasy, the Apostate Roman Church, to the Man of Lawlessness. The Greek word *anomia* (Strong's #458) translates as "lawlessness", referring to violation of the law, in this context meaning violation of God' law or the Word of God. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *torah* (Strong's #8451), translated "law", can also be translated "instruction" or "teaching". In the New Testament, the Greek word *nomos* (Strong's 3551) is used in the same way. Therefore, the Man of Lawlessness would be a man who opposed God's law, instructions, and teachings as contained and revealed in the Word of God.

Paul also calls the Man of Lawlessness the "son of destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The Greek word *apoleia* (Strong's #684) translates as "destruction", in this context referring to spiritual

destruction. (KJV translates as “perdition”). Therefore, the Man of Lawlessness would be a man of spiritual destruction. What he would do would not only lead to his own spiritual destruction, but also to the spiritual destruction of those who put their faith (trust) in the Apostate Church that he would establish, rather than trusting only in Messiah Yeshua for salvation.

The man fitting the prophetic picture of the Man of Lawlessness is Roman Emperor Constantine I (Constantine the Great), founder of the Apostate Church of the Roman Empire.

MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS WORKING FROM THE BEGINNING

Paul tells us that “the mystery of lawlessness” was already at work during his time:

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work ... (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

In this context, the Greek word *mysterion* (Strong’s #3466) refers to something that is unknown unless and until God gives spiritual knowledge and understanding of its meaning.⁴

As Paul explained to the Ephesians, Satan and his angels (demons) are at work in this world to deceive and destroy humanity:

Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the **schemes of the devil**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against **the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places** (Ephesians 6:11-12, emphasis added).

The mystery of lawlessness therefore has to do with the operation of Satan and the demons, who deceive people to follow them into rebellion against God. Just as Satan deceived Eve (followed by Adam) into rebellion against God by violating God’s commandment, Satan and the fallen angels deceive humanity into rebelling against God by violating His laws.

⁴ *Mounces’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, p. 461.

The mystery of lawlessness was already working at the time of the apostles to corrupt the true Gospel (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1). Satan and his angels continued to work to corrupt the Word of God and to create a False Church of the Roman Empire that caused people to follow the religion of the Beast, a pagan form of Christianity (Revelation 13:3).

ROME'S CHURCH REPLACED GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES AND LAW

A close prophetic link exists between the Man of Lawlessness, Constantine, and the Little Horn of Daniel 7, Papal Rome. (Note: "he" can also be translated "it".)

‘And he [it - Papal Rome] will speak out against the Most High [God] and wear down the saints [true believers] of the Highest One, and he [it - Papal Rome] will **intend to make alterations in [God's] times and in [God's] law...**’ (Daniel 7:25, emphasis added).

The "times" referred to are God's Times, the Appointed Times of the Lord (Leviticus 23). These are God's true Biblical Holy Days that reveal the prophetic pattern and prophetic timetable for God's plan of redemption. Papal Rome replaced God's Appointed Times with pagan holidays. The "law" referred to is God's Law, meaning God's commandments, teachings, and instructions as contained and revealed in the Word of God. Papal Rome replaced Biblical doctrines with Papal doctrines that contradict the Word of God.

The Bishop of Rome, later called the Pope, had from earliest times falsely claimed to be the supreme authority of the Christian Church. Rather than lead the Church in Biblical truth, the Bishops of Rome led the church in error and apostasy. A good example of this was how the Bishops of Rome tried to force the Eastern Churches to abandon the Biblical date for Passover.

ROMAN BISHOPS REPLACED TRUE BIBLICAL PASSOVER

The Biblical date for Passover is the 14th of Nisan, the date the Passover lambs were sacrificed and the date Messiah Yeshua was crucified (Exodus 12:6; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16). This date does not always fall on the same day of the week.⁵ The Church in Rome, headed by the Bishop of Rome, replaced the Biblical Passover date with Sunday Easter.

Members of the Eastern Churches of the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor) observed the Biblical date, as Yeshua and His followers had. They were called Quartodecimans (Latin for “fourteeners”). The Bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp (c. 69 – c. 155), a disciple of the apostle John, was a Quartodeciman. So was Melito (died c. 180), the Bishop of Sardis. They were leaders of the Smyrna and Sardis churches, two of the Seven Churches that the apostle John referred to in the Book of Revelation.

According to the writings of Irenaeus (d. c. 202), the Roman church had celebrated Easter on a Sunday at least since the time of Bishop Xystus (Sixtus I, 115–125).^[6] ... Shortly after Anicetus became bishop of Rome in about 155, Polycarp had visited Rome, and among the topics discussed was this divergence of custom. But, Irenaeus noted, **Anicetus could not persuade Polycarp to forgo the [Quartodeciman] observance inasmuch as these things had been always observed by John the disciple of the Lord, and by other apostles with whom he had been conversant**; nor did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to keep it: Anicetus said that he must hold to the way of the elders before him (emphasis added).⁶

Rather than correct the error of the Roman Church, the Bishop of Rome, Anicetus, rejected the true Biblical Passover date in order to hold to the unbiblical tradition “of the elders before him”. Polycarp was a true servant of the Lord who refused to follow Anicetus and the Roman Church

⁵ In AD 31, the year Yeshua was crucified, the 14th of Nisan fell on Wednesday. Yeshua resurrected three days later on the Biblical Sabbath day, Saturday, the 17th of Nisan. See Chapter 12 “The Biblical Sabbath Day Is the Day of the Resurrection” (www.messengers-of-messiah.org).

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartodecimanism>

in this error that contradicted the Word of God.

Later, the Bishop of Rome, Victor I⁷ (c. 189-199), tried to excommunicate the bishops of the churches of Asia Minor for adhering to the Biblical Passover observance:

Controversy arose when Victor, bishop of Rome a generation after Anicetus, attempted to excommunicate Polycrates of Ephesus and all other bishops of Asia for their Quartodecimanism. According to Eusebius, a number of synods were convened to deal with the controversy, which he regarded as all ruling in support of Easter on Sunday.^[44] Polycrates (c. 190), however wrote to Victor defending the antiquity of Asian Quartodecimanism. Victor's attempted excommunication was apparently rescinded and the two sides reconciled upon the intervention of bishop Irenaeus and others, who reminded Victor of the tolerant precedent of Anicetus.⁸

Victor arrogantly and falsely assumed to exercise supreme authority over all the Christian churches in his attempt to excommunicate the bishops of Asia. (To excommunicate means to cut off from being a participating member of the Christian Church.) This quest for supreme power and authority continued until the Bishop of Rome finally succeeded in establishing the Roman Papacy as the sole and supreme authority of the Christian Church.

CONSTANTINE AS HEAD OF ROMAN CHURCH REPLACED BIBLICAL PASSOVER

In AD 325, Constantine called all the bishops of the Roman Empire to a council to decide the Passover matter, as well as other issues. Constantine understood that religious unity was imperative to the stability of the Roman Empire. But religious unity would come at a terrible price of compromising Biblical truth.

With regard to setting the date for Passover observance, Constantine argued that Christians

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Victor_I

⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter> (“Controversies”).

should not observe Passover on the 14th of Nisan like the Jews. Who would disagree with the Roman Emperor? The decision of the council was that all churches celebrate Passover/Easter on Sunday. Eusebius records Constantine's words on the subject:

At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day. ... it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. ... **Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd.** ... A course at once legitimate and honorable lies open to our most holy religion. Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness. ... Why then should we follow those who are confessedly in grievous error? ... For our Saviour has left us one feast in commemoration of the day of our deliverance, I mean the day of his most holy passion; and he has willed that his Catholic Church should be one, the members of which, however scattered in many and diverse places, are yet cherished by one pervading spirit, that is, by the will of God. ... **It is, then, plainly the will of Divine Providence (as I suppose you all clearly see), that this usage should receive fitting correction, and be reduced to one uniform rule** (emphasis added).⁹

Constantine arrogantly presumed to speak for God while speaking against the Word of God. He presumed to have the authority to change what God had established, the very date on which Messiah Yeshua, as the Lamb of God, paid the price for the sins of the world. What blasphemy! Constantine certainly fits the prophetic picture of the Man of Lawlessness, who exalted himself above God by presuming to take the place of God (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Daniel 11:36).

⁹ <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/25023.htm> (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, Book 3, Chapter 18).

Believers who held to the Biblical observance of Passover were severely persecuted:

Quartodecimanism seems to have lingered into the 4th century, when Socrates of Constantinople recorded that some Quartodecimans were deprived of their churches by [Archbishop of Constantinople] John Chrysostom [c. 347–407]^[45] and that some were harassed by [Archbishop of Constantinople] Nestorius [c. 386–c. 451]^[46]¹⁰

What the Bishops of Rome had failed to do – force all churches throughout the empire to submit to the Roman Bishop’s authority – Constantine accomplished as self-appointed, sole and supreme head of the Roman Church. In time, the Bishop of Rome would take the Roman Emperor’s position of sole and supreme head of the Roman Church.

TRUE BELIEVERS A SECT OF JUDAISM, NOT A NEW RELIGION

At the Council of Nicaea, Constantine officially established the Church of the Roman Empire, the Apostate Church severed from the true Biblical Hebraic root. Prior to this time, believers in Messiah Yeshua were considered a sect of Judaism:

Until the year 325 C.E. the Christians were considered to be a Jewish sect and they had a large following in the country [Palestine] (emphasis added).

The council of the Christian Patriarchs was held at Nicea in 325 C.E. and this gathering **severed all bonds with the Jews** (emphasis added).¹¹

Messiah Yeshua did not come to start a new unbiblical religion. He came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). During the time of the Apostles, believers in Messiah Yeshua were called the sect of the Nazarenes and the Way:

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

¹¹ Gershom Bader, *The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Sages*, p. 462.

“For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of **the sect of the Nazarenes**” (Acts 24:5, emphasis added).

“But this I [Paul] admit to you, that according to **the Way which they call a sect** I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets ...” (Acts 24:14, emphasis added).

“But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning **this sect**, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22, emphasis added).

What Constantine did laid the foundation for the official state religion and Church of the Roman Empire. Without what Constantine did, Papal Rome could never have risen to such great power and authority. This is why Constantine is so prophetically central as the Man of Lawlessness to establishing the Apostasy/Apostate Church. Fittingly, Constantine held the title of Rome’s pagan high priest, *Pontifex Maximus*, a title also later adopted by the popes.

CONSTANTINE – THE KING WHO EXALTED HIMSELF ABOVE GOD

Both Paul and Daniel describe the Roman Emperor Constantine as a man who would exalt himself above every god:

“Then the king will do as he pleases, and **he will exalt and magnify himself above every god ...**” (Daniel 11:36, emphasis added).

... the man of lawlessness ... who opposes and **exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship ...** (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, emphasis added).

In presuming to take God’s place as sole and supreme head of the Christian Church, Constantine certainly exalted himself above God. In everything Constantine did, he exalted himself.

Daniel provides a prophetic picture of Constantine in Daniel 11:36-39.

“Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures. And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him, and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price” (Daniel 11:36-39).

As we examine this prophecy in detail, we will show how Constantine exactly fits Daniel’s prophetic profile.

CONSTANTINE’S GOD – THE SUN GOD, NOT THE TRUE GOD

Constantine’s god was not one of the traditional ancestral gods of Rome:

“And he [Constantine] will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, **a god whom his fathers did not know**; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures” (Daniel 11:37-38, emphasis added).

Constantine turned away from polytheistic worship of the traditional Roman gods and goddesses to monotheistic worship of the universal pagan sun god:

Constantine may have caused discomfort to some pagans – especially those of the senatorial class – when he had set up his colossal statue holding a standard

marked with Christian signs in the Basilica Nova in 312. Such a blatant display of his new religious orientation may have aroused the religious conservatism of the **pagan nobility who revered the ancestral traditions of the state and the historic temples of the gods** which adorned the ceremonial heart of the city (emphasis added).¹²

The sun gods of various pagan cults throughout the Roman Empire – such as Helios, the Greek sun god; Apollo, the Greek god of light and truth, healing and prophecy, later associated with the sun god; and Mithras, the Persian sun god – became merged into one universal son god, Sol Invictus (Unconquered Son). Sol Invictus became the official sun god of the later Roman Empire. In AD 274, the Roman Emperor Aurelian made Sol Invictus an official cult alongside the traditional Roman cults. From Aurelian to Constantine, Sol Invictus was the favored god.

During this time, there was a monotheistic movement in paganism leading to the worship of the sun god as the sole and supreme god. It is therefore not surprising that so many elements of sun-god worship are found in the Roman Church, including Sunday, the weekly holiday of the sun god; December 25th, the rebirth of the sun god; halos; and sun-burst monstrosities holding solar-disk-shaped communion hosts (Eucharist) for adoration as “God”.¹³

Certainly Satan was at work to create a false form of monotheism because he knew that in order to corrupt the worship of the one true God, he had to get pagans away from polytheism (worship of many gods and goddesses) and into monotheism (worship of one god).¹⁴

Satan succeeded in deceiving people to follow two false monotheistic religions: Pagan Roman Christianity and Islam. The first is the religion of the 6th and 7th Heads of the Beast (Western Roman Empire and Eastern/Byzantine Roman Empire); the second is the religion of the 8th Head of the Beast (the Islamic Empires). The first is a sun-god religion and the second is a moon-god

¹² Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, p. 147.

¹³ See *Too Long in the Sun and Time Is the Ally of Deceit* by Richard Rives
<http://www.toolong.com/cart/products.php>

¹⁴ However, prayer to patron saints of the Roman Church has its roots in prayer to pagan patron gods and goddesses, thus continuing a form of polytheism.

religion (Allah is the name of a pagan moon god). The first follows a solar calendar in honor of the sun god; the second follows a lunar calendar in honor of the moon god.

Constantine's favorite god was the sun god:

Constantine did, indeed, retain the pagan high priest's title of *Pontifex Maximus*, and for a decade his coins continued to feature some of the pagan gods, notably **his own favorite deity, the Unconquered Sun** [Sol Invictus] (emphasis added).¹⁵

Prior to his vision of the so-called Christian God, Constantine had a vision of the Greek god Apollo, who became identified with the sun god:

... on the route between Massilia and Trier, the emperor had “turned aside toward the most beautiful temple in the world” – probably the temple of Apollo at Grand, and ... experienced a revelation in this holy place. ... **Constantine saw Apollo, accompanied by Victory, offering him laurel wreaths indicating a life and reign of many years; and that in the likeness of Apollo he recognized himself as the saving figure to whom the divine songs of the bards had prophesied “rule of the whole world”** (emphasis added).¹⁶

As a result of this vision, Constantine claimed that the highest divinity, the sun god, gave him divine right to rule the Roman Empire.

Constantine claimed a greater right to rule through dynastic succession.³¹ **By presenting himself as the chosen one of Apollo, Constantine was rejecting tetrarchic theology and resorting to Solar syncretism for defining divine patronage.** Since Apollo was customarily syncretized with *Sol Invictus* – the “Unconquered Sun” and “Highest Divinity” revered by the earlier Illyrian

¹⁵ *The History of Christianity*, p. 140.

¹⁶ Odahl, p. 94.

emperors and popular across the empire – **Constantine claimed a higher source of divine power** for religious sanction (emphasis added).¹⁷

“Solar syncretism” refers to sun gods of various pagan religions being merged into one solar deity. Constantine understood that the worship of a universal sun god could bring all the various pagan sun god cults together into one unifying religion of the Roman Empire:

Like Claudius, Aurelian, and possibly his father, **he came to see “the Unconquered Sun” as a “Highest Deity” around which the subjects of the Roman Empire might find religious unity.** Thus, after 310 Hercules disappeared and Mars declined in use on the coins of Constantine. They were replaced by the universal Sun god, who appeared on reverse motifs holding the globe of power with the inscription SOLI INVICTO COMITI, “to the Unconquered Sun the {emperor’s} Companion.” By using dynastic succession and Solar syncretism to strengthen his position, **Constantine** was breaking the bonds of tetrarchic ideology and making a **claim for universal monarchy** (emphasis added).¹⁸

All the evidence indicates that Constantine regarded the Christ of the Christians as the sun god by another name, showing that his conversion was not a true spiritual conversion because he could not distinguish the difference between the pagan sun god and the true Son of God.

It is important to understand Constantine’s previous religion, the worship of the Unconquered Sun [Sol Invictus]. If the story of the cross in the sky is true, he may have interpreted the sign as his own special deity recommending the worship of the Christian God. Perhaps **Constantine continued to identify the sun with the Christian God ...** (emphasis added).¹⁹

¹⁷ Odahl, p. 95.

¹⁸ Odahl, p. 95.

¹⁹ *The History of Christianity*, p. 140.

SUN-GOD PAGAN HOLIDAYS ADOPTED BY CONSTANTINE'S ROMAN CHURCH

At the Council of Nicaea, the birth date of the sun god was adopted:

In 325, he [Constantine] convened the Council of Nicaea, which fixed the dates of important Christian festivals. It **opted to mark Christmas, then celebrated at varying dates, on Dec. 25 to coincide with the Roman festival celebrating the birth of the sun god ...** (emphasis added).²⁰

A recent archeological discovery links a pagan shrine in Rome with a basilica built by Constantine where December 25th was celebrated:

Italian archaeologists last month unveiled an underground grotto that they believe ancient Romans revered as the place where a wolf nursed Rome's legendary founder Romulus and his twin brother Remus.

A few feet from the grotto, or "Lupercale," the Emperor Constantine built the Basilica of St. Anastasia, where some believe Christmas was first celebrated on Dec. 25.

The Basilica of St. Anastasia was built as soon as a year after the Nicaean Council. **It probably was where Christmas was first marked on Dec. 25, part of broader efforts to link pagan practices to Christian celebrations in the early days of the new religion,** Carandini said (emphasis added).²¹

Adopting the birth date of the pagan sun god is not only contrary to the Word of God but also obscures the true birth date of Messiah Yeshua during Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets), one of the Appointed Times of the Lord (Leviticus 23:24).²²

²⁰ http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/1192729/first_dec_25_xmas_tied_to_pagan_shrine/
First Dec. 25 Xmas Tied to Pagan Shrine, by Ariel David, December 22, 2007.

²¹ http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/1192729/first_dec_25_xmas_tied_to_pagan_shrine/

²² See *The Scriptural Birth Date of Messiah Yeshua* (<http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org>).

In 321, a few years prior to the Council of Nicaea, Constantine issued a law making Sunday, *dies Solis* (“day of the Sun”), the weekly day of rest and worship, replacing the Biblical Sabbath day (Friday evening to Saturday evening).²³ He also forced pagan soldiers to assemble on Sunday and recite a monotheistic prayer that he had composed.²⁴ Constantine’s desire was to unite his empire by bringing pagan and Christians together into one religion.

CONSTANTINE’S VISION OF THE FALSE SUN-GOD CHRIST

Prior to the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, Constantine claimed to have a vision and receive instruction in a dream about the use of a sign under which to conquer his rivals to the throne of the Roman Empire:

From Eusebius, two accounts of the battle survive. The first, shorter one in the *Ecclesiastical History* promotes the belief that God helped Constantine but does not mention any vision. In his later *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius gives a detailed account of a vision and stresses that he had heard the story from the Emperor himself. According to this version, Constantine with his army was marching (Eusebius does not specify the actual location of the event, but it clearly is not in the camp at Rome), when **he looked up to the sun and saw a cross of light** above it, and with it the Greek words "Ἐν Τούτῳ Νίκα", *En toutō nika*, usually translated into Latin as "*in hoc signo vinces*," both phrases have the literal meaning "In this sign, [you shall] conquer;" a more free translation would be "Through this sign [you shall] conquer". At first he was unsure of the meaning of the apparition, but in the following night **he had a dream in which Christ explained to him that he should use the sign against his enemies**. Eusebius then continues to describe the labarum, the military standard used by Constantine in his later wars against Licinius, showing the Chi-Rho sign^[7] (emphasis added).²⁵

²³ Messiah Yeshua resurrected on Saturday, not Sunday. See Chapter 12 “The Biblical Sabbath Day Is the Day of the Resurrection” (<http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org>).

²⁴ Odahl, pp. 172-173.

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Milvian_Bridge

As previously explained, Constantine had a vision of the Greek sun god Apollo, who conveyed to him that he was chosen to rule the world. He later claimed that Christ gave him the sign under which to conquer. It would not be Messiah Yeshua who provided such a sign, for He said His kingdom was not a worldly kingdom (John 18:36).

The sign of a cross above the sun links Constantine's vision to the sun god. The cross in many forms has pagan origins and has nothing to do with the crucifixion.²⁶ The "miracle of the sun" associated with Roman Catholic Marian apparitions also fits the same pattern of deceptive Satanic activity and phenomena.²⁷

THE PAGAN ORIGIN OF THE CHI-RHO SIGN

The Chi-Rho sign was not associated with Christianity before the time of Constantine:

The accounts of the two contemporary authors [Lactantius and Eusebius], though not entirely consistent, have been merged into a popular notion of Constantine seeing the Chi-Rho sign on the evening before the battle. **Both authors agree that the sign was not readily understandable to denote Christ, which corresponds to the fact that there is no certain evidence of the use of the letters chi and rho as a Christian sign before Constantine.** Its first appearance is on a Constantinian silver coin from c. 317, which proves that Constantine did use the sign at that time, though not very prominently.^[8] He made extensive use of the Chi-Rho and the Labarum [military standard] only later in the conflict with Licinius (emphasis added).²⁸

²⁶ Messiah Yeshua was crucified on a tree, not a Roman cross, as stated in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24. The Greek word *xulou/xulon* in each passage is correctly translated "tree" in the King James Version, New King James Version, New International Version, and Amplified Bible. In other passages, such as John 19:31, *stauros* is translated "cross" but refers to the crucifixion tree as an "upright pole" or "stake". In Luke 23:26, *stauros* refers to the crossbar that Simon carried. Romans did use trees at times for crucifixion.

²⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miracle_of_the_Sun

²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Milvian_Bridge

The Chi-Rho sign is formed by superimposing the Greek letters Chi (χ) and Rho (ρ), the first two letters of *Christos* ($\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$). (Note: the χ stands for “Ch”.) Early followers of Messiah Yeshua never used the Chi-Rho sign. Constantine is responsible for its adoption as a sign of Christ by the Roman Church. A coin of Constantine minted about AD 337 shows the Chi-Rho sign on the Labarum, Constantine’s military standard.²⁹



The Chi-Rho sign is also found on a coin of Ptolemy III about the year 247-222 BC.³⁰



Ptolemy III
Chi-rho between the legs of the eagle

²⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labarum> (Wikipedia “Labarum”; Section “Vision of Constantine”).

³⁰ www.constantinethegreatcoins.com/symbols/Ptolemy.jpeg
See also C. J. Koster, *Come Out of Her, My People*, p. 33.

Clearly, the Chi-Rho sign is of pagan origins because it existed long before the time of Messiah Yeshua. Further proof is that the Chi-Rho symbol has been found on rock inscriptions dating to about 2500 BC. It is formed by the combination of two sun symbols.³¹ Again, we see the connection to the sun god – Constantine’s favorite deity – known by various names throughout the world since ancient times.

Surely, it was not Messiah Yeshua who appeared to Constantine and gave him the Chi-Rho sign to conquer the world. Surely it was Satan, who can appear as an “angel of light”, who appeared to Constantine first as the sun god Apollo and later as the False Sun-God Christ (2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Corinthians 11:4 “another Jesus”). Therefore, it is no coincidence that the false Jesus Christ of the Roman Church has all the attributes of the pagan sun god:

Some^[9] have interpreted the vision in a solar context (e.g., as a solar halo phenomenon), which may have been reshaped to fit with the Christian beliefs later expressed by Constantine. It is interesting to note that **coins of Constantine depicting him quite overtly as the companion of a solar deity were minted as late as 313, the year following the battle.** The solar deity, Sol Invictus, is often pictured with a nimbus, or halo. Various emperors portrayed Sol Invictus on their official coinage, with a wide range of legends, only a few of which incorporated the epithet invictus, such as the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI, claiming the Unconquered Sun as a companion to the Emperor, used with particular frequency by Constantine.^[10] **Constantine's official coinage continues to bear images of Sol until 325/6.** A solidus of Constantine as well as a gold medallion from his reign depict the **Emperor's bust in profile twinned ("jugate") with Sol Invictus,** with the legend INVICTUS CONSTANTINUS.^[11] The official cults of Sol Invictus and Sol Invictus Mithras were popular amongst the soldiers of the Roman army. Statuettes of Sol Invictus, carried by the standard-bearers, appear in three places in reliefs on the Arch of Constantine. **Constantine's triumphal arch was carefully positioned to align with the colossal statue of Sol by the**

³¹ Koster, p. 33.

Colosseum, so that Sol formed the dominant backdrop when seen from the direction of the main approach towards the arch (emphasis added).^{[12]32}

Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge near Rome led to him becoming the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. The triumphal Arch of Constantine dedicated three years later was aligned with the colossal statue of the sun god, had no Christian inscriptions or symbolism, but was decorated with images of Sol Invictus and Victoria (pagan goddess of victory), as well as sacrifices to pagan gods such as Apollo, Diana, and Hercules.³³

CONSTANTINE – “NO REGARD FOR THE DESIRE OF WOMEN”

“And he will show **no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women**, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all” (Daniel 11:37, emphasis added).

As previously explained, Constantine turned away from worship of the traditional Roman gods. Daniel's prophecy links this change in religious worship to him showing “no regard ... for the desire of women”.

This seems to indicate that we should look at Roman women's role in traditional Roman religion and how Constantine caused it to change.

Women priests played a prominent and crucial role in the official religion of Rome. Although the state colleges of male priests were far more numerous, the six women of the college of Vestals were Rome's only "full-time professional clergy."^[115] *Sacerdos*, plural *sacerdotes*, was the Latin word for a priest of either gender. Religious titles for women include *sacerdos*, often in relation to a deity or temple, such as a *sacerdos Cereris* or *Cerealis*, "priestess of Ceres", an office

³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Milvian_Bridge

³³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Constantine
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great

never held by men;[116] *magistra*, a high priestess, female expert or teacher in religious matters; and *ministra*, a female assistant, particularly one in service to a deity. A *magistra* or *ministra* would have been responsible for the regular maintenance of a cult. ...

From the **Mid Republic** onward, religious diversity became increasingly characteristic of the city of Rome. **Many religions that were not part of Rome's earliest state cult offered leadership roles for women, among them the [Egyptian] cult of Isis and of the Magna Mater [Great Mother].** An epitaph preserves the title *sacerdos maxima* for a woman who held the highest priesthood of the Magna Mater's temple near the current site of **St. Peter's Basilica**.^[129]

Although less documented than public religion, **private religious practices addressed aspects of life that were exclusive to women.** At a time when the **infant mortality rate** was as high as 40 percent,^[130] divine aid was solicited for the life-threatening act of giving birth and the perils of caring for a baby. Invocations were directed at the goddesses **Juno, Diana, Lucina**, the *di nixi*, and a host of **divine attendants devoted to birth and childrearing** (bold emphasis added).³⁴

Roman women held leadership and other important positions in the pagan cults. This would all change as a result of the course that Constantine set for religion in the Roman Empire. In the Roman Church, the priesthood and leadership were exclusively male.³⁵

Central to Rome's traditional religion was the cult of Vesta, with an exclusive female priesthood:

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Ancient_Rome

³⁵ In contrast, each and every believer is a priest of the New Covenant Priesthood (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6). In the early church, women worked along side of men as equals, some women being leaders of local churches and even apostles (Acts 18:18, 26 Priscilla's name first shows she led the church in Cenchrá; Romans 16:7 "Junias" is actually "Junia", a female apostle). For more information, see *Christianity's Misconceptions of Women* by Peter and Christie Michas; free copy at Messengers of Messiah's website (www.messengers-of-messiah.org).

a public priesthood of six women devoted to the cultivation of **Vesta**, goddess of the **hearth of the Roman state and its vital flame**. A girl chosen to be a Vestal achieved **unique religious distinction, public status and privileges, and could exercise considerable political influence**. Upon entering her office, a Vestal was emancipated from her **father's authority**. In archaic Roman society, these priestesses were the only women not required to be under the legal guardianship of a man, instead answering directly to the Pontifex Maximus.[74]

The Vestals embody the profound connection between domestic cult and the religious life of the community.[78] Any householder could rekindle their own household fire from Vesta's flame. The Vestals cared for the **Lares** and **Penates** of the state that were the equivalent of those enshrined in each home. Besides their own festival of **Vestalia**, they participated directly in the rites of **Parilia**, **Parentalia** and **Fordicidia**. Indirectly, **they played a role in every official sacrifice**; among their duties was the preparation of the *mola salsa*, the salted flour that was sprinkled on every **sacrificial victim** as part of its immolation.[79]

... When the Christian emperor **Gratian** refused the office of *pontifex maximus*, he took steps toward the dissolution of the order. His successor **Theodosius I** extinguished Vesta's sacred fire and vacated her temple (bold emphasis added).³⁶

The cult of Vesta that had endured at the center of ancient Roman life for over one thousand years was extinguished within sixty years after Constantine changed the course of religious history for the Roman Empire.³⁷ In 391, Emperor Theodosius forbade all pagan worship and closed all pagan temples,³⁸ thus bringing to completion what Constantine began by making this apostate form of Roman Christianity the **ONLY** legal religion of the Roman Empire. However, paganism did not cease to exist but was assimilated and transformed by the Roman Church into a “Christianized” form of paganism.

³⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Rome

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vestal_Virgin

³⁸ Antonia Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, p. 58.

Satan masterfully worked to assimilate pagans into a pagan form of Christianity, thus corrupting Biblical truth. The establishment of one legal state religion for the Roman Empire meant that all peoples of the empire had no choice but to become members of the Apostate Church, the religious system of the 6th Head of the Beast (Revelation 13:16). In contrast, true spiritual regeneration is a voluntary act of repentance and receiving the free gift of salvation in Messiah Yeshua.

In his political and personal life, Constantine also showed “no regard ... for the desire of women” (Daniel 11:37). In his quest for power to become sole ruler of the Roman Empire, he opposed his wife’s brother, Maxentius, who was killed at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. And for the same reason, he executed his half-sister’s husband, Licinius, and their son.³⁹ Constantine even had his own wife, Fausta, murdered, as well as his son, Crispus, by a former wife:

Constantine's desire to keep a firm grip on his prospective heirs ... [and] a reminder to ... [Fausta's] children that Constantine would not hesitate in 'killing his own relatives when he felt this was necessary.'⁴⁰

The historical record shows Constantine’s true nature and character, with a great amount of evidence that he was anything but a true believer in Messiah Yeshua.

³⁹ “Licinius and Martinianus surrendered to Constantine at Nicomedia on the promise their lives would be spared: they were sent to live as private citizens in Thessalonica and Cappadocia respectively, but in 325 Constantine accused Licinius of plotting against him and had them both arrested and hanged; Licinius's son (the son of Constantine's half-sister) was also killed.[196] Thus Constantine became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire.[197]”– Wikipedia, Constantine the Great (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great).

⁴⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great

CONSTANTINE’S GOD – “A GOD OF FORTRESSES”

Constantine honored “a god of fortresses”:

“But instead **he will honor a god of fortresses**, a god whom his fathers did not know ... (Daniel 11:38, emphasis added).

As previously explained, Constantine turned from the traditional Roman gods to the sun god. The cult of the Persian sun god Mithras was the leading religious cult among Roman soldiers. When Constantine had his vision, he had his soldiers fight under the Chi-Rho sign that was used to join pagan and Christian soldiers together. The pagan soldiers would have accepted Constantine’s god as the sun god by another name. Because fortresses are associated with the military, this False Sun-God Christ could be called “a god of fortresses”.

“And **he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god ...**” (Daniel 11:39, emphasis added).

Constantine was victorious over every rival to the throne of Rome and every adversary of the Roman Empire:

The foremost general of his time, Constantine defeated the emperors Maxentius and Licinius during civil wars. He also fought successfully against the Franks, Alamanni, Visigoths, and Sarmatians during his reign – even resettling parts of Dacia which had been abandoned during the previous century.⁴¹

Constantine richly honored his god and richly rewarded those who were loyal to him and his Roman Church:

⁴¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great - Note: “Dacia corresponds to modern countries of Romania and Moldova, as well as smaller parts of Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, and Ukraine” in the Balkan Peninsula (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dacia>).

“But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; **he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures.** And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; **he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him, and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price**” (Daniel 11:38-39, emphasis added).

Constantine donated buildings and land to the Roman Church. He constructed grand basilicas lavishly furnished and decorated with gold, silver, and costly stones. He provided incentives to pagans and Christians to become members of his church. Christians were no longer persecuted but Biblical truth was compromised and corrupted. True believers were infiltrated and marginalized by the huge influx of pagans entering Constantine’s church. They brought their pagan beliefs, festivals, and rituals with them – modified in such a way as to appear Christian.

CONSTANTINE “TAKES HIS SEAT IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD”

As we have shown, Paul and Daniel describe the Man of Lawlessness in the same way, as a man who:

“exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship” (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

“will exalt and magnify himself above every god” (Daniel 11:36).

Constantine claimed to be the sole and supreme head of the church on earth. In this way, he took “his seat in the temple of God”:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless **the apostasy** comes first, and **the man of lawlessness** is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that

he takes his seat in the temple of God ... (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, emphasis added).

THE TRUE TEMPLE OF GOD

The True Temple/Church of Messiah Yeshua is not a man-made religious institution but is made up of believers joined spiritually by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. For this reason, the True Church can never be divided. Messiah Yeshua is the ONLY head of His True Church.

The apostle Paul is clear about this:

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE (2 Corinthians 6:16).

... as Christ [Messiah] also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

CONSTANTINE TAKES CONTROL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Constantine intended to usurp Messiah Yeshua's position by making himself the sole and supreme head of the Roman Church. Usurp means to seize power, position, property, rights, etc. by force without legal right. This is exactly what Constantine did. This is also true of the Roman Papacy that claims to represent Messiah Yeshua on earth and speak for God in dictating religious doctrines and dogmas.

When Constantine called all the bishops together for the first church council in Nicaea in AD 325, he claimed the right to take control of the Christian Church and to direct and influence the

council's proceedings and decisions in an ungodly way. His desire was to unify the various churches under his authority by resolving differences and conflicts about religious doctrine. Constantine understood that religious unity would be a great stabilizing factor for his empire.

Constantine spoke and acted against God's Word (Daniel 11:36 he "will speak monstrous things against the God of gods"). At the Council of Nicaea, he condemned those who held to the Biblical observance of Passover on the 14th of Nisan:

Constantine had been appalled to find that a few churches in the east were still employing a Jewish [Biblical] calculation for [Passover]. ... Constantine displayed an antipathy to the Jews. ... He felt that ... Christians should have "nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd". ... it was incumbent upon the few churches in Syria and Palestine who continued to follow the Jewish [Biblical] calculation to desist. ... The eastern custom of calculating Easter [Passover] in the Jewish [Biblical] month of Nissan was rejected as improper ...⁴²

The Eastern Churches were faithful to observe Passover according to the Biblical commandment and in the way Messiah Yeshua and His disciples observed this Appointed Time of the Lord (Leviticus 23:5). At the Council of Nicaea, the date for Passover was changed from its true Biblical date and those who continued to observe the Biblical date were anathematized (cursed).

Constantine certainly fits the prophetic description of the Man of Lawlessness by officially establishing the Apostasy in the form of the Roman Church. Under Constantine, Roman Christianity became the religion of the Imperial Court and the favored religion of the Roman Empire. In 391, the Roman Emperor Theodosius outlawed paganism, making the Roman Church the only legal church and religion of the Roman Empire. While it appeared that paganism died out, in fact, paganism was absorbed and transformed into an unbiblical form of Christianity.

⁴² Odahl, p. 199.

CONSTANTINE “DISPLAYING HIMSELF AS GOD”

Eighteen years after his alleged conversion, Constantine glorified himself as the sun god atop the Column of Constantine in the new city he named after himself, Constantinople:

The column was dedicated on May 11, 330 AD, with a mix of Christian and pagan ceremonies.

In Constantine's day the column was at the center of the Forum of Constantine (today known as Cemberlitas Square), an oval forum situated outside the city walls in the vicinity of what may have been the west gate of Antoninia. On its erection, the column was 50 meters [164 feet] tall, constructed of nine cylindrical porphyry blocks surmounted by **a statue of Constantine in the figure of Apollo** (emphasis added).⁴³

Constantine DISPLAYING himself as the sun god – Apollo/False Sun-God Christ – was literal fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy regarding the Man of Lawlessness:

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the son of destruction, **who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship**, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, **displaying himself as being God** (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, emphasis added).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE RESTRAINER

The apostle Paul tells us that believers at Thessalonica in Greece understood who restrained the Man of Lawlessness from being revealed:

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Column_of_Constantine

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? **And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work;** only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7, emphasis added).

The revealing of the Man of Lawlessness refers to his coming on to the historical scene and fulfilling the prophecy regarding the establishment of the false church. Ultimately, it is the Spirit of God who restrains lawlessness, rebellion against the Word of God. The Spirit of God works in various ways throughout the world, not only through believers indwelt by His Holy Spirit. Because the 70th Week of Daniel has already been fulfilled and is not about a future seven-year Tribulation, Paul was not referring to the removal of believers in the Rapture.

God works throughout the course of human history in various ways so that all Biblical prophecy is fulfilled. A period of instability and disintegration of the Roman Empire allowed Constantine to rise to power. Also, Satan was allowed to operate to lead Constantine to establish the Roman Church. It was God's will to remove the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit for these events to take place. Paul tells us that God sent a deluding influence because people did not receive the love of the truth to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

SATANIC ACTIVITY ASSOCIATED WITH CONSTANTINE & ROME'S CHURCH

Paul tells us that Satanic activity would be associated with Constantine and Rome's Church:

“the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Satan performed supernatural signs in order to deceive Constantine, to guide and direct him to officially establish the apostate Roman Church and a pagan form of Christianity. This is one of Satan's greatest deceptions: deceiving billions of people into thinking that the Roman Church is the True Church of Messiah Yeshua.

Paul tells us that people are deceived by Satan's lie because they do not love the truth:

and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence** so that they might believe what is false in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, emphasis added).

Paul also tells us that God sent the deluding influence. This is similar to God sending an evil spirit to torment Saul because of his disobedience and rebellion against God (1 Samuel 16:14-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9). Satan and the fallen angels/demons are under God's sovereign control and cannot operate without His permission. When people reject the truth of the Word of God, they are open to deluding and deceiving spirits, who have permission to operate in their lives because of their rejection of truth and rebellion against God.

God tests people to see whether they seek and follow the truth – God's Word is Truth (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17) – or, because they fail to seek and follow the truth, are deceived by the lies of Satan, who is the father of lies (John 8:44). This is why God allowed Satan to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden. And this is why God allows Satan and the fallen angels/demons to operate and deceive humanity into following false religions and false humanistic philosophies.

God allowed Satan to deceive Constantine, a man interested in power, not Biblical truth. The history of the Roman Church shows that the Roman Papacy is about power, not Biblical truth. Satanic and demonic activity continues to operate in the Roman Church through Marian apparitions (that proclaim and confirm unbiblical doctrine); unholy Eucharist communion hosts manifesting flesh and blood (forbidden by God to consume); weeping and bleeding statues and images (forbidden by the Second Commandment); Satanic/demonic healings attributed to the Virgin Mary and saints; and through demonic visions, demonic attacks and stigmata associated with Roman Catholic mystics.

God's true worshipers worship Him in Spirit and Truth:

“But an hour is coming, and now is, when **the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24, emphasis added).

Paul warns believers not to be deceived by any gospel contrary to the Word of God:

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9, emphasis added).

Paul exhorts believers to stand firm and hold to the true Gospel and teachings that he and the other apostles of Messiah Yeshua taught:

He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus [Yeshua] Christ [Messiah]. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15, NIV).

FUTURE JUDGMENT AND DESTRUCTION OF ROME

There are two aspects of Paul's prophecy regarding the Man of Lawlessness and the Apostasy: THE MAN (Constantine) and THE APOSTATE CHURCH (Roman Church) he would establish. Both involve the working of the “mystery of lawlessness”, the working of Satanic/demonic forces to deceive humanity into rebelling against God and against the Word of God.

The first part of the prophecy deals with Constantine but then shifts to the Roman Church that he established and has been maintained by the Roman Papacy. This false religious system will be destroyed at Messiah Yeshua's Second Coming:

And then that lawless one [Roman Church] will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His [Second] coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:8-9).

The "lawless one" in this context refers to Apostate Roman Church that Constantine established. Revelation 18 describes the final destruction of Rome. The city of Rome is called the Great Harlot, Babylon the Great, and the Woman that rides the Beast (Revelation 17:1, 3 5, 18; 18:2). When Messiah Yeshua returns, Rome and her false church will be judged and destroyed in one day (Revelation 18:8). As Pagan Rome persecuted and killed true believers, so did Papal Rome (Revelation 17:6; 18:24). God warns His people to come out of this false church so as not to participate in her sins and receive her judgment (Revelation 18:4).

II. CONSTANTINE & THE HEALED 6TH HEAD OF THE BEAST

PAPAL ROME IS THE HEALED 6TH HEAD OF THE BEAST

As previously explained, the 6th Head of the Beast represents the Roman Empire, with Rome as its capital. The fatal wound of the 6th Head represents the fall of Rome in AD 476, marking the final collapse of the Western Roman Empire.⁴⁴ The healing of the fatal wound represents the rise of Papal Rome to great power and authority:

And I saw one of his [its] heads [6th Head – Rome] as if it had been slain [fall of Rome], and his [its] fatal wound was healed [Papal Rome's rise to power].

⁴⁴ The Eastern Roman/Byzantine Empire (7th Head of the Beast) continued until the fall of Constantinople to Islam (8th Head of the Beast) in 1453. Constantinople became Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast [Satan's ungodly kingdom] and they worshiped the dragon [Satan], because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" (Revelation 13:3-4, emphasis added).

Note that in this context, the "whole earth" that "followed after the beast" refers to the peoples of the Roman Empire, the greatest empire of the ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern world. Daniel's prophecies describe the Roman Empire (4th Beast of Daniel) as conquering the "whole earth" (Daniel 7:23).⁴⁵ These peoples who had been ruled by Rome came under the influence of Papal authority after the fall of Rome and the rise of the Germanic Kingdoms in Western Europe. As previously shown, Papal Rome's Church is the Apostate Church, not the True Church of Messiah Yeshua. The "arrogant words and blasphemies" (Revelation 13:5) it spoke represent its false doctrines and practices that contradict the Word of God. "Authority to act for forty-two months" (Revelation 13:5) represents a prophetic period of time, during which the Roman Church exercises great power and authority in the world. The Roman Church has a history of persecuting and killing true believers, those who do not bow down to the authority of Papal Rome, as prophesied: "it was given to him to make war with the saints" (Revelation 13:7; 17:6). The Roman Church has "authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation", today numbering over one billion human souls (Revelation 13:7).

And there was given to him [it] [Papal Rome] a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him [it]. And he [it] opened his [its] mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. **And it was given to him [it] [Papal Rome] to make war with the saints [true believers] and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him [it] [Papal Rome].** And all who dwell

⁴⁵ Likewise Daniel's prophecies describe the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great as conquering the "whole earth" (Daniel 8:5). The "whole earth" refers to the known civilized world of the Mediterranean and Middle East at that time.

on the earth will worship him [it] [Papal Rome], everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear (Revelation 13:5-9, emphasis added).

Roman Emperor Constantine, whom we have identified as the Man of Lawlessness, officially established the Roman Church, without which Papal Rome could never have risen to such great power and authority – that continues to this day. The popes have followed in the prophetic footsteps of Constantine. As Constantine declared himself to be the sole and supreme head of the Roman Church, the Papacy likewise declared itself to be the sole and supreme head of the Roman Church, taking the place of Christ on earth.

And as Constantine ruled as the highest political and religious authority over the Roman Empire, the Roman Papacy during its history has claimed to be not only the highest spiritual authority on earth, but also the highest earthly authority, falsely claiming to be Yeshua's representative on earth. But Yeshua rejected Satan's offer of the kingdoms of this world, saying that His kingdom is not a worldly kingdom (Matthew 4:8- 10; Luke 4:5-8; John 18:36).

PAPAL ROME'S RISE AS A SOVEREIGN WORLDLY POWER

The rise of the Papacy to such great power can be traced over the centuries:

During the Early Church, the bishops of Rome enjoyed no temporal [worldly secular] power until the time of Constantine. After the fall of Rome (the "Middle Ages"), the papacy was influenced by the temporal rulers of and surrounding the Italian Peninsula; these periods are known as the Ostrogothic Papacy, Byzantine Papacy, and Frankish Papacy. Over time, the papacy consolidated its territorial claims to a portion of the peninsula known as the Papal States. Thereafter, the role of neighboring sovereigns was replaced by powerful Roman families during the *saeculum obscurum*, the Crescentii era, and the Tusculan Papacy. ...

The "Donation of Constantine", an 8th century forgery used to enhance the prestige and authority of popes, places the pope more centrally in the narrative of Constantinian Christianity. The legend of the Donation claims that Constantine offered his crown to Sylvester I (314–35), and even that Sylvester baptized Constantine. In reality, Constantine was baptized (nearing his death in May 337) by Eusebius of Nicomedia, an Arian bishop, unlike the pope. ...

Although the "Donation" never occurred, Constantine did hand over the Lateran Palace to the bishop of Rome, and begin the construction of Old Saint Peter's Basilica (the "Constantinian Basilica"). The gift of the Lateran probably occurred during the reign of Miltiades (311–14), Sylvester I's predecessor, who began using it as his residence. Old St. Peter's was begun between 326 and 330 and would have taken three decades to complete, long after the death of Constantine. **Constantine's legalization of Christianity, combined with the donation of these properties, gave the pope an unprecedented level of temporal power**, for the first time creating an incentive for secular leaders to interfere with papal succession (emphasis added).⁴⁶

From 537 to 752, the Byzantine Emperor had the authority to approve and confirm the election of the bishop of Rome before his consecration. Not until the Papacy became independent of the Byzantine Emperor could it rise as a great sovereign power and authority. A major change in the political situation in the Italian peninsula created just such an opportunity for the Roman Papacy to become an independent secular power:

In 751, Aistulf took Ravenna and threatened Rome. In response to this threat, Pope Stephen II made an unusual journey north of the Alps to visit the Frankish king, Pepin III, to seek his help against the invading Lombards.

The pope anointed Pepin at the abbey of St Denis, near Paris, together with

⁴⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_papacy

Pepin's two young sons Charles and Carloman. Pepin duly invaded northern Italy in 754, and again in 756. **Pepin was able to drive the Lombards from the territory belonging to Ravenna but he did not restore it to its rightful owner, the Byzantine emperor. Instead, perhaps accepting the validity of the Donation of Constantine, he handed over large areas of central Italy to the pope and his successors.**

The land given to pope Stephen in 756, in the so-called Donation of Pepin, made the papacy a temporal power. This territory would become the basis for the Papal States, over which the popes ruled until the Papal States were incorporated into the new Kingdom of Italy in 1870. For the next eleven centuries, the story of Rome will be almost synonymous with the story of the papacy (emphasis added).⁴⁷

The Donation of Pepin establishing the Papal States marks the beginning of the Papacy as a temporal (earthly or worldly) power:

The Papal States comprised **territories under direct sovereign rule of the papacy. ... This governing power is commonly called the temporal power of the Pope, as opposed to his ecclesiastical primacy.**

At its greatest extent, in the 18th century, the Papal States included most of Central Italy — Latium, Umbria, Marche and the Legations of Ravenna, Ferrara and Bologna extending north into the Romagna. It also included the small enclaves of Benevento and Pontecorvo in southern Italy and the larger Comtat Venaissin around Avignon in southern France (emphasis added).⁴⁸

Prior to the establishment of the Papal Roman Church as a territorial sovereign entity:

⁴⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_papacy

⁴⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_States

The Church spent its first three centuries as an unofficial organization, unable to hold or transfer property in times of persecution. ... **With the Christian emperorship of Constantine I, the Church's private property grew quickly** through the donations of the pious and the wealthy; the Lateran Palace was the first significant donation, a gift of Constantine himself.

Other donations soon followed, mainly in mainland Italy but also in the provinces, but the Church held all of these lands as a private landowner, not as a sovereign entity. When in the fifth century the Italian peninsula passed under the control of first Odoacer and then the Ostrogoths, the church organization in Italy, and **the bishop of Rome as its head, submitted to their sovereign authority while asserting their spiritual primacy over the whole Church** (emphasis added).⁴⁹

Not until the Papal States were established in 756 did the Papacy begin to rule as a sovereign temporal power. With the rise of the Kingdom of Italy, the Papal States were annexed (1860 and 1870). In 1929, an independent Papal State, Vatican City, was created through the Treaty of the Lateran, an agreement between Pius XI and the Italian government, thereby restoring the Papacy as a sovereign temporal monarchy.

⁴⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_States

III. WHY THE ROMAN CHURCH IS THE APOSTASY

To understand why the Roman Church is the Apostate Church, the Apostasy that Paul warned about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, its doctrines must be compared to the Word of God. When this is done, it is clear that Roman Christianity is not Biblical Christianity.⁵⁰

The Roman Church is claimed to be the one True Church, with the Pope as its sole and supreme head. With 1.2 billion members and the Pope the only religious leader who rules a sovereign nation, there is no other religious institution in the world like it. It is the oldest, continuously functioning institution in the world, originating from the 6th Head of the Beast.

Papal Rome is working to bring all Christians into unity with the Roman Church. Papal Rome is also working to bring the world's major religions into unity with the Roman Church, thus revealing its apostate nature. Wherever the Roman Church has spread throughout the world, it has always blended with the native pagan religions. The religious system of Rome since ancient times and continuing to today is a fundamental part of the Beast.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE SUPREME AUTHORITY, NOT UNBIBLICAL PAPAL TRADITIONS

The Bible is the inspired Word of God and the only standard of truth. Therefore, religious dogma, doctrine, belief, ritual, practice, custom, etc. that contradicts the Word of God is error.

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

⁵⁰ For an outstanding in-depth and comprehensive study comparing Roman Catholic doctrine and Biblical truth, we very highly recommend *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, by James G. McCarthy.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Note that at the time the Book of Acts and Paul's second letter to Timothy were written, the Scriptures referred to the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with Messianic prophecies; they reveal God's plan of redemption; they reveal the prophetic pattern and prophetic timetable for the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. They are, therefore, foundational to understanding the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy as revealed in the New Testament.

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9).

Any gospel that deviates from the Gospel taught by the Apostles is error, whether it comes from a human being or an angel. A false gospel from an angel would necessarily come from a fallen angel (demon), masquerading as an angel of God.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

As the apostle Paul tells us, the fallen angels are actively working to deceive human beings and lead them to their destruction:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

Satan disguises himself as an “angel of light”. Those who are deceived by him and deceive others to follow the Roman Church have the appearance of godliness:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ [Messiah]. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Many priests and nuns have come to true faith in Messiah Yeshua and left the Roman Church. Powerful testimonies of fifty former Catholic priests are presented in the book, *Far from Rome, Near to God*.⁵¹ Powerful testimonies of former priests and nuns are also presented in “Catholicism: Crisis of Faith” (DVD).⁵² The Lord commands “His people” to “come out” of the Roman Church:

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

The Protestant Reformation was a response to God’s command to separate from the Roman Church. The reformers understood that Roman Catholic doctrines regarding the very foundation of salvation contradict the Word of God. They wanted to reform the Roman Church but found that it was not possible. God revealed to the Protestant Reformers that the Roman Church is the Harlot of Revelation 18 and that the Papacy is Antichrist. They knew that because the Roman Church could not be reformed, they were commanded by God to come out of it, which they did.

⁵¹ Richard Bennett and Martin Buckingham, *Far From Rome, Near to God: The Testimonies of Fifty Converted Catholic Priests*, available from The Berean Call (<http://www.thebereancall.org/content/far-rome-near-god>).

⁵² The DVD “*Catholicism: Crisis of Faith*” is available from The Berean Call (<http://www.thebereancall.org/content/catholicism-crisis-faith>).

We want all Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church members to know that God loves them and that is why He calls them out of the Apostate Church.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches elevate Tradition ABOVE the Word of God as the supreme authority. While claiming to hold the Word of God and Tradition as equally authoritative, the truth is that whenever there is a conflict between the two, Tradition takes precedence over the Word of God.

Even though the Roman Church split into the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in 1054, their foundational doctrines are the same. From the standpoint of Biblical prophecy, they are two branches of the same Apostate Church.

Rome remains the prophetic focal point of the Apostate Church because of the Papacy's false claim to be the sole and supreme head of the Christian Church on earth. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, there is no salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. The ecumenical movement is being used by the Papacy to bring churches separated from Rome back into the fold, under the supreme authority of the Pope.

MESSIAH YESHUA IS HEAD OF THE TRUE CHURCH, NOT THE POPE

Messiah Yeshua is the only Head of His Church, not the Pope or any other person.

He [Messiah Yeshua] is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything (Colossians 1:18).

The Roman Papacy falsely claims to be the sole and supreme head of the church on earth. Because this claim is false, it means the Pope REPLACES Messiah Yeshua, the one and only true Head of His Church. In claiming to take Messiah Yeshua's place as the head of the church on earth, the Pope fits the definition of "antichrist" since one of the meanings of "antichrist" is

one who places himself “in place of Christ” (*antichristos*, Strong’s #500). One who replaces Messiah Yeshua is also “against Christ”, the other meaning of “antichrist”.

According to the Roman Catholic dogma of Papal infallibility (defined in the First Vatican Council of 1869-1870), the Pope is infallible (without error) in his supreme position as shepherd and teacher in matters of faith and morals:

The infallible teachings of the Pope are part of the Sacred Magisterium, which also consists of ecumenical councils and the "ordinary and universal magisterium". In Catholic theology, papal infallibility is one of the channels of the infallibility of the Church.⁵³

This is blasphemy. Only God is infallible and the Word of God the only infallible truth.

MESSIAH YESHUA IS THE ROCK UPON WHICH HIS TRUE CHURCH IS BUILT, NOT PETER

Messiah Yeshua is The Rock the True Church is built upon:

For this is contained in Scripture: **“BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”** This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, **“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,”** and, **“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”**; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed (1 Peter 2:6-8 – from Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22, bold emphasis added).

⁵³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_infallibility

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints [believers], and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **CHRIST [MESSIAH] JESUS [YESHUA] HIMSELF BEING THE CORNER STONE**, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22, emphasis added, bold emphasis added).

For who is God, but the LORD? And **who is a rock, except our God** (Psalm 18:31, emphasis added).

'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. **Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock?** I know of none' (Isaiah 44:8, emphasis added).

"There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, **Nor is there any rock like our God**" (1 Samuel 2:2, emphasis added).

Matthew 16:15-18 is misinterpreted to support the erroneous tradition that Peter is the Rock upon which the Church is built:

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God." And Jesus [Yeshua] answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter [*petros*], and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it (Matthew 16:15-18).

In his book (pages 238-243), *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*, James G. McCarthy explains:

The word Jesus chose to use for rock, *petra*, is a feminine noun that refers to a *mass of rock*. The New Testament uses this word in Matthew 7:24,25 to refer to the bedrock upon which a wise man built his house. *Petra* is also found later in Matthew's Gospel with reference to Jesus' tomb, which workers had carved out of solid rock (Matthew 27:60).

Peter's name, *Petros*, on the other hand, is masculine in gender and refers to a *boulder* or a *detached stone*. Greek literature also uses it of a small stone that might be picked up and thrown.

What Jesus said to Peter could be translated, "You are *Stone*, and upon this *bedrock* I will build My church." **His choice of words would indicate that the rock on which the church would be built was something other than Peter.**

Anyone reading the Gospel of Matthew in the original Greek language would have noticed the difference. The reader would have had to pause and decide what was meant by "upon this rock" (Matthew 16:18). **The reader would not immediately have equated rock (*petra*) with Peter (*Petros*), because the words are different.**

To determine the best interpretation, the reader would have had to look more closely at the context. **This is the second and greatest weakness with the Roman Catholic interpretation: It fails to give proper emphasis to the context.**

The context of Matthew 16:13-20 is not about Peter; it is about Jesus. ... Peter's insight into Jesus' true identity was a revelation from God. In this context, Jesus [was] making a play on words. ... **The cultural context of the passage ... supports interpreting "this rock" as referring to Jesus in His identity as the Son of God.** Matthew wrote his Gospel for a Jewish audience. He expected his readers to be familiar with Old Testament imagery.

How would a Jewish reader interpret “upon this rock”? G. Campbell Morgan answers, **“If we trace the figurative use of the word rock through Hebrew Scriptures, we find that it is never used symbolically of man, but always of God”** (emphasis added).

For those who seek to know the truth, God is faithful to reveal it to them. Former priest Joseph Zacchello has a powerful testimony of what the Lord revealed to him about The Rock upon which His True Church is built:

When I was preaching that the Pope is the vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter, the infallible rock upon which Christ’s church was built, a voice seemed to rebuke me ... saying: You saw the Pope in Rome: his large, rich palace, his guards, men kissing his foot. Do you really believe that he represents me? I came to serve the people; I washed men’s feet ... **Do you really believe that God has built his church upon a man. ... If the Roman Catholic Church is built upon a man, then it is not my church** [emphasis added].⁵⁴

THE APOSTLE PETER WAS NOT THE FIRST BISHOP/POPE OF ROME

According to Roman Catholic tradition, the apostle Peter was the first Bishop or Pope of Rome. But there is no Scriptural or historical evidence to support this claim. In fact, this tradition contradicts the Word of God and archeological discoveries.

The Word of God shows that Peter was the apostle to the Jews and that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (non-Jews):

But on the contrary, seeing that I [Paul] had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised [the Gentiles], just as Peter had been to the circumcised [the Jews]

⁵⁴ *Far From Rome, Near to God: The Testimonies of Fifty Converted Catholic Priests*, p. 265.

(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles) (Galatians 2:7-8).

The Word of God shows us that Peter went to Babylon, where a Jewish community lived. In this context, the name Babylon is not a code word for Rome but actually refers to Babylon (1 Peter 5:13).

Messiah Yeshua appeared to Paul and told him that he would go to Rome:

But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also” (Acts 23:11).

Paul confirms in the Word of God that he did go to Rome:

There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome. And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him (Acts 28:14-16).

Paul preached the Gospel to those who were in Rome (Romans 1:15). He never mentions Peter in his greeting to 28 leaders and members of the Roman church (Roman 16; 2 Timothy 4:11).

In 1953, the apostle Peter’s ossuary (bone box) was discovered in a tomb at Dominus Flevit monastery on the Mount of Olives, where other members of the Jerusalem church were also buried. Details of this discovery, and its suppression by the Pope, are documented in F. Paul Peterson’s report: “Peter’s Tomb Recently Discovered in Jerusalem”.⁵⁵ Simcha Jacobovici also

⁵⁵ First published in 1960, 4th edition in 1971. Out of print but available for free on various internet websites (<http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org/NewPDF/peters-jerusalem-tomb.pdf>).

documents the discovery of Peter's ossuary in *The Search for St. Peter* (Season 2, Episode 2, *The Naked Archeologist series*).⁵⁶

The tradition that Peter came to Rome and became the first Bishop or Pope of the Roman Church has no basis in the Word of God or in history. It is based upon later tradition that was developed in order to support the Roman Bishop's claim as the sole and supreme head of the church. According to this claim, the Pope's authority is based upon succession from Peter. But as the Word of God and history both show, this claim is false and therefore shows that the Pope has no authority or claim of authority as leader of the Christian Church.

GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT IS THE ONLY INFALLIBLE AUTHORITATIVE TEACHER, NOT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MAGISTERIUM

The Spirit of God indwells every true believer:

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth:

“And I [Messiah Yeshua] will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (John 16:13).

⁵⁶ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1237713/>
http://spiritube.com/simcha-jacobovici/where-is-st-peter-really-buried-video_180caa971.html

Messiah Yeshua tells us that God's Holy Spirit is our teacher:

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26).

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me” (John 15:26).

The apostles Paul and John confirm that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher:

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Romans 8:14).

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him (1 John 2:27).

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, only the Roman Catholic Magisterium (teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church) can interpret the meaning of the Word of God. The Magisterium is claimed to be the only and infallible teaching authority based upon the false claims that Peter was the first Pope and that the Popes are the successors of Peter. Therefore, the Magisterium has no valid claim as the only and infallible interpreter of the Word of God.

The Roman Catholic Church controlled access to the Word of God for centuries. Not until the Protestant Reformation was the Word of God made available to individual believers. We are instructed by God to learn His Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). God has also blessed the Body of Messiah Yeshua, His True Church, with teachers of the Word of God (Ephesians 4:11).

The Roman Catholic Magisterium has promulgated false doctrines that contradict the Word of God, thereby elevating Roman Catholic tradition as infallible truth above the Word of God. This is blasphemous and very grave error.

Messiah Yeshua condemned the Jewish religious leaders of His day for setting aside the commandments of God in favor of their traditions. Likewise would He condemn the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church that contradict the Word of God:

“You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN’”
(Matthew 15:7-9).

And He [Messiah Yeshua] answered and said to them, “And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”
(Matthew 15:3)

“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” He was also saying to them, “You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition” (Mark 7:8-9).

God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, condemning man-made traditions in place of a real heart relationship with Him:

Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, **And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,**” Therefore behold, I will once again deal ... with this people ... And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish ... (Isaiah 29:13-14, emphasis added).

SACRAMENTAL SALVATION IS A “DIFFERENT GOSPEL” REPLACING TRUE BIBLICAL SALVATION

The Roman Church replaced true Biblical salvation with a sacramental system of salvation, administered by a priesthood that replaces Messiah Yeshua, who is the one and ONLY mediator between every human being and God (1 Timothy 2:5). This is a “different gospel”:

For if one comes and preaches another Jesus [Yeshua] whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully (2 Corinthians 11:4).

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ [Messiah], for a different gospel (Galatians 1:6).

The Roman Church sacramental system of salvation requires membership, baptism, confession (penance), confirmation, and taking the Eucharist. Salvation through sacramental rituals has pagan origins in the ancient mystery religion cults. According to the Word of God, no sacraments are required for salvation, not even baptism, as shown by Yeshua’s words to the criminal asking for His mercy at the Crucifixion:

And he was saying, “Jesus [Yeshua], remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, **today you shall be with Me in Paradise**” (Luke 23:42-43, emphasis added).

Yeshua told the repentant man that he would be with Yeshua in Paradise, referring to Sheol Paradise, where Yeshua descended after death. Sheol Paradise was the abode of the righteous (“Abraham’s bosom” – Luke 16:22) separated by a great chasm from Sheol Torment (Hades/Hell – Luke 16:23, 26). From Sheol Paradise all the souls ascended with Messiah Yeshua into Heaven. There is no mention of Purgatory in the Bible.

All that is required for true salvation is acknowledgment of one’s sins, turning away from sin and to God (the meaning of repentance), and receiving the FREE GIFT of salvation made possible ONLY through Messiah Yeshua’s all sufficient and finished sin-atonement sacrifice:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] our Lord (Romans 6:23).

... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus [Yeshua] as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved (Romans 10:9).

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace (Romans 11:6).

Good works are the result of salvation, not the requirement for salvation:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His

workmanship, created in Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Note that the actual meaning of “faith” is trust in God, and the only way of salvation God the Father has made is through His Son, Messiah Yeshua. Those who put their trust in Messiah Yeshua’s sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins have complete assurance of their salvation:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that **you may know that you have eternal life** (1 John 5:13, emphasis added).

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, the sacrament of confession, also called the Rite of Reconciliation, is required to maintain a right relationship with God. This involves confessing one’s sins to a priest and doing “penance” for those sins. Penance is usually saying certain prayers, such as the *Our Father* or the *Hail Mary*. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, the act of penance “makes satisfaction for” one’s sins.

But the Word of God shows us that confession of sins is to be made directly to God, not to a priest (Psalm 32:5; Nehemiah 1:6; Daniel 9:4-5; Ezra 9:6-7). Nowhere in the New Testament do we find an example of sacramental confession to a priest.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Furthermore, the Word of God shows that it is only by the blood of Messiah Yeshua that the payment for sins (expiation) and the satisfaction/appeasement of God (propitiation) for sins can be accomplished.

By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus [Yeshua] Christ [Messiah] once for all. And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;

but **He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time**, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, “THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND UPON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,” He then says, “AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.” **Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin** (Hebrews 10:10-18, bold emphasis added).

My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus [Yeshua] Christ [Messiah] the righteous; and **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world** (1 John 2:1-2, bold emphasis added).

Atonement for our sins is only through the blood of Messiah Yeshua. His atonement sacrifice was all sufficient, complete, and for all time. There is nothing any person can do to pay for or atone for his/her sins in this life or the next. Roman Catholic doctrines that a sinner must pay for “temporal” punishment in this life through acts of penance, or in the next life by suffering in Purgatory, are in direct contradiction to the Word of God.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ For a detailed study on the Roman Catholic doctrine of confession and penance from a Biblical perspective, see pages 76-87 in *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God* by James G. McCarthy.

MESSIAH YESHUA IS THE ONLY MEDIATOR BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

Messiah Yeshua is the one and only mediator between human beings and God:

Jesus [Yeshua] said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me (John 14:6).

For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] (1 Timothy 2:5).

Messiah Yeshua is the High Priest of the New Covenant:

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man (Hebrews 8:1-2).

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).

To add a priest or any other person as any kind of mediator between man and God the Father other than Yeshua contradicts the Word of God. It takes the focus off the one and only way of salvation. Anything that takes the focus off Yeshua as the ONLY way of salvation and ONLY mediator between man and God is a barrier and a hindrance to having a true, personal relationship with God.

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, NOT THE ROMAN PRIESTHOOD

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, salvation is through the sacraments of the Roman Church, as mediated by the Roman priesthood. But the Word of God is clear that each and every believer is part of the New Priesthood of the New Covenant, with Messiah Yeshua as the High Priest, the only mediator of the New Covenant.

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

... and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (Revelation 1:6).

As priests of the New Covenant, believers are to live in obedience to God, serve God and share the Good News that Yeshua is the Messiah.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1).

The priesthood of the Roman Church is in contradiction to the Word of God, has no authority over the true believer, and is not required for salvation in any way.

ROMAN CATHOLIC EUCHARIST IS "ANOTHER JESUS"

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, the Eucharist is the literal body, blood, soul, and divinity of Messiah Yeshua. Yet, this contradicts Yeshua's own words that He had to go away in order for the Holy Spirit to come:

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [Holy Spirit] shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

This doctrine also contradicts God’s commandment forbidding the consumption of blood:

‘And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people’ (Leviticus 17:10).

Yeshua would never violate or command His followers to violate God’s commandments:

For a Jew, drinking human blood would have been more than repulsive; it would have been unlawful. The law of Moses strictly forbade Jews from drinking blood (Leviticus 17:10-14). We can be sure that if the disciples had thought that Jesus was asking them to violate this command, heated discussion and loud protests would have resulted. Yet there is no hint of such controversy in any of the accounts of the Last Supper.

There is no reason to believe that the disciples thought for one moment that the bread and wine changed into Christ’s body and blood. Nowhere do we read of their carefully protecting every crumb of consecrated bread or falling to their knees and worshipping the bread and wine. **To the contrary, immediately after the Lord is said to have changed the wine into His blood, the Lord Himself referred to it as wine:** But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom. – Matthew 26:29 (emphasis added).⁵⁸

Yeshua says that communion is to be done in remembrance of His sacrifice:

⁵⁸ McCarthy, p. 135.

And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; **do this in remembrance of Me**” (Luke 22:19, emphasis added).

Communion is SYMBOLIC – bread of His body, wine of His blood. In the same way, Yeshua describes Himself in a figurative way as being “the Bread out of Heaven” that “gives life to the world”:

“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT’” Jesus [Yeshua] therefore said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world” (John 6:31-33).

How did Yeshua, the Bread of Life from Heaven, give life to the world?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes [trusts] in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Eternal life comes from receiving God’s free gift of salvation in the all-sufficient and finished work of Messiah Yeshua’s sin-atonement sacrifice. Yeshua asks us to remember the terrible price only He could pay so that we could have forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. That is the meaning of communion. The bread is symbolic of His body that was broken for us, the wine symbolic of His blood that was shed for us.

The Eucharistic Jesus is “another” Jesus, not the true Yeshua of the Bible. To worship bread and wine as the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Messiah Yeshua is idolatry.

PAGAN HOLIDAYS REPLACED GOD’S BIBLICAL HOLY DAYS

The Roman Church replaced God’s Biblical Calendar with the Pagan Roman Solar Calendar, and replaced God’s Biblical Holy Days with pagan holidays. God’s Biblical Calendar and Appointed Times (Holy Days) are the foundation of all Biblical prophecy, revealing the prophetic pattern and prophetic timetable.

On the 4th Day of Creation, God created the sun and the moon:

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for **seasons** [*moadim*], and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so (Genesis 1:14-15, NASB, emphasis added).

The Hebrew word *moadim*, the plural form of *moad* (Strong’s #4150), is translated “seasons” but actually means “appointed times” or “religious feasts”. The ArtScroll Tanach Series, *Genesis*, provides a more accurate translation from the Hebrew into the English:

God said, ‘Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven to separate between the day and the night; and they shall serve as signs, and for [Biblical] **festivals** [*moadim*], and for days and years; and they shall serve as luminaries in the firmament of the heaven to shine upon the earth’ (Genesis 1:14-15, emphasis added).

The Psalmist makes note of God creating the moon for the *moadim*:

He made the moon for the **seasons** [*moadim*]; The sun knows the place of its setting (Psalm 104:19, NASB, emphasis added).

Again in this context, the actual meaning of *moadim* is “religious festivals” or “appointed times”, as translated by The ArtScroll Tanach Series, *Psalms*:

He made the moon for [Biblical] **festivals** [*moadim*], the sun knows its destination (Psalm 104:19, emphasis added).

THE BIBLICAL CALENDAR

According to the Biblical Hebrew (Jewish) Calendar, the month is based upon the lunar cycle from New Moon to New Moon (29.5 days). There are 12 lunar months of 29-30 days in one Biblical year. To synchronize the 12 lunar cycles with the longer solar year, a 13th month is added every two or three years (7 times in the 19-year cycle).⁵⁹ This keeps the Appointed Times of the Lord in their proper season. (Note: This adjustment in the Biblical Calendar makes it a lunisolar calendar in contrast to the Julian and Gregorian solar calendars of Rome.)

THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE LORD – GOD’S PROPHETIC TIMETABLE & PATTERN

God established the Appointed Times, the Biblical Holy Days, as recorded in Leviticus 23:

1. The Biblical Sabbath Day – Friday evening to Saturday evening (Leviticus 23:3).
2. Passover (Pesah) – 14th day of the first month, Abib/Nisan (Leviticus 23:5).
3. Feast of Unleavened Bread – 7 days: 15th to 21st of Nisan (Leviticus 23:6-8).
4. Pentecost (Shavuot) – 50th day after Passover (Leviticus 23:15-21)
5. Feast of Trumpets (Rosh HaShanah) – 1st day of 7th month, Tishri (Leviticus 23:24-25).
6. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) – 10th day of 7th month, Tishri (Leviticus 23:27-28).
7. Feast of Booths/Tabernacles (Sukkot) – 7 days: 15th to 21st of Tishri (Leviticus 23:34-36).

The purpose of the Biblical Holy Days is to reveal God’s plan of redemption and confirm the identity of the Messiah:

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a mere shadow of

⁵⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_calendar

what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ [Messiah] (Colossians 2:16-17, emphasis added).

Paul shows that God's purpose for these Appointed Times is to reveal and confirm the identity of the true Messiah, Yeshua. However, he tells Gentile believers that it is not necessary for them to ritually observe these days, but to understand how they point to Messiah Yeshua.

YESHUA'S FULFILLMENT OF THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE LORD

Messiah Yeshua was born on Rosh HaShanah (Feast of Trumpets), dedicated at the Temple on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and as a new-born infant spent His first Sukkot (Feast of Booths or Tabernacles) in a manger in Bethlehem.

He was immersed (baptized) in the Jordan River during the period of time of repentance leading up to Rosh HaShanah, marking His 30th birthday. He began His public ministry shortly after, on a Biblical Sabbath day, that day being Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), when He proclaimed the year of Jubilee (Luke 4:16-21).

Yeshua sacrificed Himself as God's Passover Lamb on the 14th of Nisan (Wednesday), the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed at the Temple. He resurrected three days later, on the first weekly Biblical Sabbath day between Passover and Pentecost (Shavuot), the 17th of Nisan (Saturday).

Future fulfillment fits the following prophetic pattern: Yeshua is coming to catch up (Rapture) believers from the earth during Rosh HaShanah and prevent Israel's destruction by destroying invading armies at Armageddon on the Day of Atonement, followed by the Feast of Tabernacles, when He will be dwelling with His people and begin to rule from Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom.

SATAN’S REPLACEMENT OF BIBLICAL HOLY DAYS WITH PAGAN HOLIDAYS

Satan has deceptively worked to remove and obscure God’s prophetic pattern and timetable by replacing the Appointed Times of the Lord with pagan holidays. In Christianity, this includes:

1. Replacing the Biblical Hebrew Calendar with the pagan solar calendar of Rome (pagan Julian calendar and Roman Catholic Gregorian calendar). Replaces the lunar months so that the calendar is totally disconnected from the lunar cycle, which is the basis of the Biblical months and the dates of the Biblical Holy Days, the Appointed Times of the Lord (Leviticus 23).

2. Replacing the Biblical Sabbath Day with Sunday, the weekly holiday in honor of the sun god. God never changed the Biblical Sabbath to Sunday. Yeshua rose on the Biblical Sabbath day, Saturday, not Sunday.⁶⁰

3. Adopting December 25th (Christmas), the day of the rebirth of the sun god.

4. Replacing the Biblical dates for Passover (14th of Nisan) and the resurrection (17th Nisan) so that Easter always falls on Sunday, thus obscuring the true prophetic timetable for Passover, the Resurrection, and Pentecost.

Easter is associated with pagan rites in honor of the goddess, including fertility symbols of eggs and hares.⁶¹

5. Adopting pagan festivals of gods and goddesses, modifying and renaming them in honor of Mary and the saints. For example, the Roman Church’s observance of:

a predawn candlelit procession in honour of the Virgin Mary. It was the Christianization of a pagan religious ceremony involving the Roman goddess

⁶⁰ See “The Biblical Sabbath Day Is the Day of the Resurrection” [http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org/GodsMasterPlan/Ch12\(1_27_11Final\)SabbathResurrection.pdf](http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org/GodsMasterPlan/Ch12(1_27_11Final)SabbathResurrection.pdf)

⁶¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

Ceres, which retained a number of features that had characterized the pagan ceremony, such as the time of year and the time of day, the use of candles and the colour black, the visitation of a number of different locations [in Rome] the singing, the presence of women, and above all the commemoration of a female deity.⁶²

SECOND COMMANDMENT FORBIDS RELIGIOUS IMAGES

According to the Second Commandment:

“You shall not make for yourself an idol [carved image], or any likeness [image] of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship [bow down to] them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exodus 20:4-5).

The Hebrew word *pecel* (Strong’s #6459), translated “idol”, refers to a “carved image”. The Hebrew word *temunah* (Strong’s #8544), translated “likeness”, refers to an “image or likeness”. The Hebrew word *shachah* (Strong’s #7812), translated “worship”, means to “bow (self) down”, “humbly beseech”, “do reverence”, “worship”.⁶³

The official Roman Catholic Catechism DELETES the Second Commandment⁶⁴ (Exodus 20:4-5) and divides the Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17) into two separate commandments in order to hide the fact the Second Commandment prohibiting religious images has been deleted.

According to the Tenth Commandment:

⁶² Chris Maunder, *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, p. 146.

⁶³ Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary)*, pp. 95, 125, 114.

⁶⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 551-552.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17).

The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church divides this one commandment into two:

9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

The ONLY reason for this change is to cover up the deletion of God’s Second Commandment.

The Word of God says nothing is to be taken away or added to His Word:

“You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

“Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32).

Messiah Yeshua confirms that nothing is to be taken away or added to His Word:

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18-19).

There is no justification for violating the Word of God on the matter of religious images. One excuse to try and justify the use of religious images is that the Ark of the Covenant, that God gave Moses instructions to build, had two cherubim (angels) on it. But the Ark of the Covenant

was in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, where no one but the High Priest went once a year on the Day of Atonement. It was never used in the same manner as the religious images of the Roman Church.

“I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images” (Isaiah 42:8).

Because demons can and do attach to religious images, bowing down to them, kissing them, or giving them any kind of veneration can open the door to the spiritual realm of demons, giving them permission to operate in a person’s life. The Book of Revelation specifically refers to the judgment of those participating in the idolatrous worship of the Roman Church:

And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk (Revelation 9:20).

The Word of God is clear that only God is to be worshipped:

And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God” (Revelation 22:8-9).

WORSHIP OF THE GODDESS TRANSFORMED INTO MARIAN DEVOTION

The Lord says that He does not share His glory with another:

“I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images” (Isaiah 42:8).

Messiah Yeshua corrected those who elevated Mary because of her relationship to Him:

And it came about while He [Yeshua] said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.” But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it” (Luke 11:27-28).

In the Word of God, Mary acknowledges her need of God’s Savior, contradicting Roman Catholic doctrine that she was conceived without sin and remained sinless:

And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).

The Word of God shows that Mary had children with Joseph after Yeshua was born, contradicting Roman Catholic doctrine that she remained a virgin:

And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and **kept her a virgin UNTIL she gave birth to a Son**; and he called His name Jesus [Yeshua] (Matthew 1:24-25, emphasis added).

And His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him, and called Him (Mark 3:31).

The Greek word *alephos* (Strong’s #80) in Mark 3:31 translates “brother”, which is consistent with Matthew 1:25, showing that Mary did not remain a virgin after Yeshua’s birth.

Another fundamental error regarding the Roman Catholic Mary is that she is the one who crushes the head of the serpent, Satan. The Roman Catholic Douay translation of the Bible replaces “he” with “she”, changing the Word of God to conform to Roman Catholic doctrine.

I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: **she shall crush thy head**, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel (Genesis 3:15, Roman Catholic Douay Bible, emphasis added).

In the original Hebrew text, Genesis 3:15 has a masculine, not feminine, subject:

“And I will put enmity Between you [Satan] and the woman, And between your seed and her seed [Messiah Yeshua]; **He shall bruise you on the head**, And you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15, emphasis added).

This is consistent with the whole of the Word of God because Messiah Yeshua is the one who defeated Satan by His sin-atonement sacrifice:

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus [Yeshua] be with you (Romans 16:20).

... the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

SATANIC APPARITIONS MASQUERADE AS ROMAN CATHOLIC MARY

The Satanic/demonic nature of Marian apparitions is revealed by messages contradicting the Word of God. The apparition often appears holding a baby in her arms, but Yeshua is not a baby anymore. After His resurrection, He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19; Acts 5:31).

At Lourdes, France in 1858 the apparition claimed to be the “Immaculate Conception”, meaning that she was conceived without sin and therefore sinless. But the Word of God tells us that all have sinned; only Yeshua is sinless (Romans 3:23; Hebrews 4:15).

At Fatima, Portugal in 1917 the apparition told the three children to whom she appeared that God wished them to suffer to pay the price for people’s sins.⁶⁵ Yet the Word of God tells us that because God loved us so much, He gave His Son as the complete all-sufficient atonement for humanity’s sins (John 3:16; Hebrews 9:11-12, 25-26; 10:10-14).

The apparition of Fatima also told the children to pray the Rosary “to obtain the peace of the world ... for she alone will be able to help”.⁶⁶ But only the true Prince of Peace, Messiah Yeshua, can bring peace to the world (Isaiah 9:6). In fact, the Rosary is no different than prayer beads of other false religions, including Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism that open up a spiritual channel with demons (see below “Pagan Origin of the Rosary”).

At Medjugorje, Yugoslavia in 1981, the apparition said: “Moslems, Orthodox [Christians] and Catholics are all my children”.⁶⁷ However, Allah is not the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Muslims do not believe Yeshua died for the sins of the world.

These few examples prove beyond any doubt that Marian apparitions are Satanic in nature. There is a pattern to these messages: taking every attribute that belongs exclusively to Messiah Yeshua for itself, including – Savior; Suffering Servant; atoning work continuing through her; Medatrix (female Mediator); Intercessor; Advocate; Co-Redemptrix (female Redeemer); sinless; omnipresent; divine; worthy of worship; Queen of Peace; Queen of Queens; New Eve; assumed bodily into Heaven; Protectress (female Protector); performs miracles; prophetess; Morning Star; crushes Satan underfoot.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ John J. Delaney, *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*, p. 184.

⁶⁶ Delaney, p. 193.

⁶⁷ Jacov Marin, *Queen of Peace in Medjugorge*, p. 159.

⁶⁸ Jim Tetlow, *Messages from Heaven: A Biblical Examination of the Queen of Heaven’s Messages in the End Times*, pp. 152-153. Book and DVD available free online (www.eternal-productions.org - www.understandthetimes.org).

GOD CONDEMNS WORSHIP OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

The Roman Catholic Virgin Mary combines characteristics of the ancient pagan mother goddess and virgin goddess.

As motherhood is a common recurring concept in all religions, The Blessed Virgin Mary receives many titles in the Roman Catholic Church, such as Queen of Heaven and Our Lady, Star of the Sea, that are familiar from earlier Near Eastern [pagan] traditions.⁶⁹

The reason the Roman Catholic Mary holds the same titles as the pagan goddess is because it is from the same Satanic/demonic source. One of her titles is Queen of Heaven:

Queen of Heaven was a title given to a number of ancient sky goddesses in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, in particular Anat, Isis, Innana, Astarte, Hera and possibly Asherah (by the prophet Jeremiah). Elsewhere, Nordic Frigg also bore this title. In Greco-Roman times Hera, and her Roman aspect Juno bore this title. Forms and content of worship varied. The title Queen of Heaven is used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians for Mary.⁷⁰

What was God's response to His people worshipping the Queen of Heaven in ancient times (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-25)? Why would it change?

“As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you. Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 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. Do they spite Me?” declares the LORD. “Is it not

⁶⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_goddess

⁷⁰ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_of_heaven_\(antiquity\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_of_heaven_(antiquity))

themselves they spite, to their own shame?” **Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out** on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched” (Jeremiah 7:16-20, emphasis added).

The Roman Catholic Virgin Mary is Satan’s counterfeit, a transformation of the pagan goddess into the “Virgin Mary”, who is elevated as no human being should ever be elevated.

Supernatural signs, miracles, and healings associated with the Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox Mary are Satanic/demonic in nature, including weeping/bleeding images/statues. God never contradicts Himself by working supernatural signs through images He forbids according to the Second Commandment. Satan and the other fallen angels/demons work by deception, hiding their true identities, and are ready to respond to prayers to such idolatrous images.

PAGAN ORIGIN OF THE ROSARY

Messiah Yeshua tells us not to pray repetitious prayers:

“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words” (Matthew 6:7).

Messiah Yeshua tells us we are to pray to our Heavenly Father through Him and that our prayers will be responded to (Matthew 6:6-13; Luke 11:1-4).

Prayer beads are found in various pagan and false religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and Bahai Faith:

The exact origins of prayer beads remain uncertain, but their earliest use probably traces to Hindu prayers in India.^{[3][1][6]} Buddhism probably borrowed the concept from Hinduism.^{[3][1]} The statue of a holy Hindu man with beads dates to the 3rd century BC.^{[3][6]}

Although the use of prayer beads grew within those religions, it did not enter Judaism, perhaps because of its association with other religions, and to date Judaism does not use prayer beads.^[31]⁷¹

Engaging in repetitious prayer can induce an altered state thereby opening a spiritual channel to the demonic realm. So can the use of “meditation” on the “mysteries” of the Rosary. This is the reason why demons have instructed human beings since ancient times to use these methods of invoking (calling on) the demons and establishing communication with them. By engaging in such unbiblical occult practices, the person gives the demons permission to come into their lives. The demons take on whatever form they want to project, for example, the “Virgin Mary”, in order to deceive people into following their false messages.

The Rosary was taught by a demon (possibly Satan himself) appearing as the Roman Catholic Virgin Mary in response to a prayer to her from the Roman Catholic Saint, Dominic.⁷²

The spread of the Rosary, a Marian devotion, is attributed to the preaching of St. Dominic.^{[34][35]} The Rosary has for centuries been at the heart of the Dominican Order. Pope Pius XI stated that: "The Rosary of Mary is the principle and foundation on which the very Order of Saint Dominic rests for making perfect the life of its members and obtaining the salvation of others."^[36]

For centuries, Dominicans have been instrumental in spreading the rosary and emphasizing the Catholic belief in the power of the rosary.^[37]⁷³

The demon told Dominic to teach the Rosary and spread its use. Most of the Rosary prayers are to the Roman Catholic Virgin Mary (150 “Hail Mary” prayers).

⁷¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_beads

⁷² <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13184b.htm>

⁷³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Dominic (Section “Rosary”).

The “Hail Mary” prayer asks for Mary’s intercession: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.” This prayer contradicts the Word of God that forbids communication with the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Calling Mary “the mother of God” also contradicts the Word of God. God has no mother. Mary only bore the physical body of Yeshua.

All prayer is to be directed to God the Father through His Son, Messiah Yeshua. God also hears and responds to sincere prayers from the hearts of those who want to know Him wherever they are in the world, whatever their particular situation, even if they do not have access to Biblical truth. But God does not respond to prayers directed to false gods or other demonic beings. If there is a response, it is not coming from God, but from Satan or some other demonic source.

The Rosary is an occult tool that opens a spiritual link with the demonic realm, no different from the prayer beads of Hinduism or Buddhism. Unbiblical veneration and elevation of a human being has created “another” Mary, not the true Miriam (Mary) of the Bible. This has opened the door for demons to operate to deceive human beings and lead them away from true Biblical worship. It has also opened the door to more and more unbiblical doctrine that has been given by Satan and/or demon(s) masquerading as the “Virgin Mary”.

PRAYER TO DEAD “SAINTS” FORBIDDEN BY GOD

The Roman Church cult of saints developed out of the pagan worship of gods and goddesses:

The cult of saints and martyrs grew rapidly in the fourth century, another example of the blending of the old paganism with Christianity. ... The Christian historian Theodoret boasts that in many places saints and martyrs took the place of pagan gods, and their shrines the place of pagan temples. Some saints were claimed to cure barrenness, others protected travellers, detected perjury, foretold the future, and many healed the sick.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ *The History of Christianity*, pp. 141-142.

The cult of martyrs also developed “through an extension of a cult of deceased family members that was standard in Graeco-Roman paganism”.⁷⁵

But what does God say about communication of any kind with the dead?

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or **a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD;** and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, emphasis added).

What is God’s reaction to people who pray to the dead instead of to Him?

And when they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,” **should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?**” (Isaiah 8:19, emphasis added).

God does not respond to prayers directed to the “Virgin Mary” or the “saints”. But those prayers can be heard and responded to by Satan and the other demons (fallen angels), who appear in various forms, including Mary, the saints, and others who have died. They hide their true identity in order to deceive, mislead, and destroy humanity. Praying to the dead gives demons permission to operate in a person’s life.

The apostle Paul said that only by remaining on earth could he benefit believers, even though his desire was to go be with the Lord in Heaven:

But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ [Messiah], for that is very much better; yet **to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.** And convinced of

⁷⁵ Maunder, p. 100.

this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith (Philippians 1:22-25, emphasis added).

This shows Paul could not help believers from Heaven; to help them he needed to be living on earth. If this is the case for Paul, it is certainly the case for any other dead “saint”.

Messiah Yeshua tells us that we are to pray to our Heavenly Father in His name:

“And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

Why would we want to pray to anyone other than to our Heavenly Father, through His Son, Yeshua, the One who created us and loved us so much that He suffered the worst agony to pay the price for our sins? What greater love is there? He is the eternal High Priest in Heaven, the only Mediator between man and God:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus [Yeshua] the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need** (Hebrews 4:14-16, emphasis added).

PURGATORY IS NOT IN THE BIBLE

Messiah Yeshua explained what happened to saved and unsaved people after they died prior to His resurrection:

“Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom [Sheol Paradise]; and the rich man also died and was buried.

And in Hades [Hell/Sheol Torment] he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:22-23).

After the death of His physical body, Yeshua’s spirit-soul descended into Sheol Paradise for three days, where He revealed Himself as the Messiah (Luke 23:43). Across the great uncrossable chasm that separated Sheol Paradise from Sheol Torment (Hell), the unsaved souls would have been able to see Yeshua, just as the rich man was able to see Abraham and Lazarus (1 Peter 3:19).⁷⁶ When Yeshua ascended into Heaven, the souls-spirits of those who had been in Sheol Paradise ascended with Him because of His finished work for salvation. Now when a saved person dies, his/her soul-spirit immediately and directly goes to Heaven.

Nowhere in the Word of God is Purgatory mentioned because it does not exist. Nowhere in the Word of God does it tell us that prayers for the dead are able to move a person out of Purgatory and into Heaven. The Roman Catholic Church uses an apocryphal book upon which to base the doctrine of Purgatory. But the apocryphal books are not the inspired Word of God and were never accepted as such by the Jews or the Protestants.

According to 2 Maccabees 12:39-46, every man who had been killed in battle was found to have a pagan idol under his clothing. Their commander, Judas, made arrangements for an offering to be made in Jerusalem for the idolatrous sin they had brought into the camp:

In the light of Leviticus 4:1–6:7 it seems more likely that Judas Maccabaeus sent the money to Jerusalem to provide for a sin or trespass offering. His purpose would have been to atone for the defilement that the sin of the idolaters had brought upon the camp, in which case the offering was for the living, not the dead.

... there is nothing in the law of Moses that would indicate that offering for the dead were ever an authentic part of the Jewish faith. Second Maccabees 12,

⁷⁶ *Sheol* is the Hebrew word referring to the underworld of the dead. A great chasm that no one could cross separated Paradise (“Abraham’s bosom”) and Hell/Hades (Luke 16:26).

therefore, proves nothing more than that the unknown writer of the book believed that sacrifices could atone for the sins of the dead. It does not even prove that Judas Maccabaeus himself believed such a thing. The writer is clearly presenting his own interpretations of Judas' actions and motivations.

The anonymous author of Second Maccabees does not claim to speak for God. He does not even present his book as an original work. He states that it is the abridgement of another man's writings: "All this, which Jason of Cyrene set forth in detail in five volumes, we will try to condense into a single book" (2 Maccabees 2:23 NAB).⁷⁷

CELIBATE PRIESTHOOD IS UNBIBLICAL

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, priests (and nuns) must remain celibate. Roman Catholic tradition also claims Peter was the first Bishop/Pope of Rome (a claim proven to be false by the Word of God and history – see above). But the Word of God shows us that Peter was married:

And when Jesus [Yeshua] had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever (Matthew 8:14).

God said it was not good for Adam to be alone and established marriage:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

⁷⁷ McCarthy, p. 109.

Nowhere in the Word of God does it state the being celibate is required or even preferable for serving God. In fact, it says that it is better to be married than to fall into sexual sin:

But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn (1 Corinthians 7:9).

How many priests and nuns have fallen into sin because they were forced to live an unbiblical, unnatural, celibate life (1 Corinthians 7:5)? The apostle Paul's choice not to remarry (he would have been married as required to be a member of the Sanhedrin) was a personal choice but not one that he said must be enforced on all those who choose to serve the Lord in ministry (1 Corinthians 7:7).

PAGAN ORIGIN OF RELICS THAT ARE UNCLEAN TO GOD

The cult of relics originated in the ancient pagan world:

In religion, **a relic is a part of the body of a saint or a venerated person**, or else another type of ancient religious object, carefully preserved for purposes of veneration or as a tangible memorial. **Relics are an important aspect of some forms of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Shamanism, and many other religions** (emphasis added).⁷⁸

In contrast, the Word of God tells us that the greatest spiritual uncleanness comes from contact with the dead. Such contact rendered a priest unclean and was not to be brought into the Tabernacle/Temple of the Lord.

‘The one who touches the corpse of any person shall be unclean for seven days. That one shall purify himself from uncleanness with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he shall be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean. **Anyone who touches a corpse, the body of a man who has died, and does not purify**

⁷⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relic>

himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from Israel. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him' (Numbers 19:11-13, emphasis added).

Yet, according to Roman Catholic (and Eastern Orthodox) tradition, remains of the dead are required to be placed in the altars of the churches.

The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 decreed that every altar should contain a relic, making it clear that this was already the norm, as it remains to the present day in the Catholic and Orthodox churches.⁷⁹

This means that according to the Word of God, every Roman (and Orthodox) church altar is unclean in God's sight. Therefore, any kind of supernatural activity associated with relics is Satanic or demonic in nature:

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work ... in accord with the **activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness** for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 9-10, emphasis added).

⁷⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relic>

REFERENCES

New American Standard Bible version unless otherwise noted.

Wikipedia articles are subject to possible revision after date originally cited for this study.

Bader, Gershom. *The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Sages*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1988.

Bennett, Richard and Martin Buckingham. *Far From Rome, Near to God: The Testimonies of Fifty Converted Catholic Priests*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994.

Available from The Berean Call (<http://www.thebereancall.org/content/far-rome-near-god>).

Bullinger, E. W. *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1967.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (Complete and Updated). New York: Doubleday, 1995.

Catholicism: Crisis of Faith (DVD).

Available from The Berean Call (<http://www.thebereancall.org/content/catholicism-crisis-faith>).

Delaney, John J. *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*. New York: Doubleday, 1961.

Gregg, Steve (Editor). *Revelation: Four Views – A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997.

Koster, C. J. *Come Out of Her, My People*. Northriding, Republic of South Africa: Institute for Scripture Research (Pty) Ltd., 2001.

<http://isr-messianic.org/publications/come-out-of-her-my-people.html>

Marin, Jacov. *Queen of Peace in Medjugorge*. Milford, OH: The Riehle Foundation, 1989.

McCarthy, James G. *The Gospel According to Rome: Comparing Catholic Tradition and the Word of God*. Available from The Berean Call (<http://www.thebereancall.org/content/gospel-according-rome>).

Maunder, Chris (Editor). *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*. New York: Burns and Oates, 2008.

Mounce, William D., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

Odahl, Charles Matson. *Constantine and the Christian Empire*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Rives, Richard. *Time Is the Ally of Deceit*. Lewisburg, TN: Partakers Publications, 2008 (www.toolong.com).

Rives, Richard. *Too Long in the Sun*. Lewisburg, TN: Partakers Publications, 2010 (www.toolong.com).

Tetlow, Jim. *Messages from Heaven: A Biblical Examination of the Queen of Heaven's Messages in the End Times* (Book and DVD). Fairport, NY: Eternal Productions, 2002. Book and DVD available free online (www.eternal-productions.org - www.understandthetimes.org).

The History of Christianity (A Lion Handbook). Batavia, IL: Lion Publishing Corporation, 1977.

Tripolitis, Antonia. *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.

Zodhiates, Spiros, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (NASB). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1984, 1990.