

The Seven Headed Beast

Author: Larry W. Wilson

The Seven Religious Systems of the World

The book of Revelation divides the people of the world into seven general religious systems: **Atheism** (including agnostics, deists, etc.), **Heathenism** (tribal religions, occult groups such as Wiccan, etc.), **Judaism** (Orthodox, Reformed, etc.), **Islam** (Sunni, Shiite, etc.), **Eastern Mysticism** (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.), **Catholicism** (Orthodox, Greek, Anglican, etc.) and **Protestantism** (Baptists, Pentecostals, etc.). The Bible considers Atheism to be a religion because it is a faith-based belief system, that is, atheists *believe* there is no God.

The seven heads on the seven-headed beast in Revelation 13:1 represent the seven religious systems of the world. (See [wake-up.org/?p=4631](https://www.wake-up.org/?p=4631).) Everyone on Earth belongs to one of the seven religious systems and this will prove surprisingly important as the revelation of Jesus unfolds. When Jesus speaks through the 144,000, He will prove every religious system is blasphemous and false! He has to do this because the people within each system are convinced that their religious beliefs are true.

The seven religions of the world are antagonistic toward one another because they actually worship seven different Gods, and each God requires something different for salvation. Jesus foreknew this outcome when He separated mankind at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and He intends to use the diversity of mankind to demonstrate a profound point. In every religious system, there are honest hearted people who sincerely love and honor the God they know. All of these individuals have one thing in common: they recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit. (John 10:16)

When the time comes for Jesus to select the 144,000, most of them will not have a Christian background. Some Christians will have a hard time accepting this concept, but they should not. The apostle Paul was not a Christian when Jesus selected him, Paul (Saul) was a devout Pharisee. Jesus saw that he had a wonderful heart, but his head was misguided by his religious heritage and convictions. Like John in Revelation 10, each of the 144,000 will personally meet with Jesus and once He clears a few things up, they will immediately recognize and worship the Creator! The 144,000 will stand firm in their faith because they are honest hearted and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Jesus will choose these servants, both men and women (Joel 2:29), from every tongue, culture, and religious background. He does this so the 144,000 will be effective working among their own people. Jesus wants to save as many people as possible so He will use people that can speak to their own brothers and sisters. God understands man's religious biases, cultural prejudices, and racial emotions. Currently, a Muslim cannot tell a Protestant that his religion is false and expect a good outcome. Likewise, a Catholic cannot tell a Jew that his religion is false and expect a good outcome. However, Catholics can speak to Catholics, Muslims can speak to Muslims, Jews can speak to Jews, and Protestants can speak to Protestants (maybe)!

Three Convenient Lies

The devastation caused by the first four trumpets will cause the religious and political leaders of the world to assemble and discuss God's wrath. The infrastructures of the nations will be in ruins and two billion people will be missing, dead, or dying. World leaders will be moved by fear and circumstances to set aside petty differences. Fearing more divine wrath is imminent, the leaders will humbly discuss many otherwise inflammatory issues behind closed doors. In an effort to determine which god is angry. Is it the Muslim god, "Allah," the Jewish god, "Jehovah," the Christian God called, 'God the Father' " or the Hindu god of destruction, "Shiva" who is responsible for the disastrous events. Of course, no one will be able to provide conclusive evidence and this will produce the following question: *"Does mankind worship one God having different titles or many different gods?"* This question will be inflammatory because Jews worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but Muslims worship the God of Abraham, Ishmael, and Mohammed. If Jews and Muslims worship the same God, why is the "will of God" for Jews different from the teachings of Mohammed? The Old Testament exalts Jacob's descendants, not Ishmael's descendants. (Genesis 17:18-21) At the other end of the table, Catholics and Protestants will have conflict. Both religious systems believe in "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost" but they are far apart on the properties of salvation. Catholics believe that church sacraments are necessary for salvation and Protestants oppose this. Instead, Protestants believe that salvation comes through faith in Christ (there is diversity on what faith actually means). To make matters even more complicated, the gods of the Muslims, Jews, and Hindus do not have a Son called "Jesus" and these religious systems will strenuously oppose the idea that Jesus is a member of deity.

The leaders will also discuss the prickly matter regarding worship. Catholic traditions do not agree with Protestant traditions, and Islamic traditions do not agree with Hindu or Jewish traditions. Even though everyone agrees there is an angry God, how does a religiously and politically diverse world go about appeasing whichever god has devastated the world and killed two billion people?

The religious leaders of the world are a diverse group and they will be unable to resolve these questions. The survivors in each religious system will be looking to their experts for answers, so the clergy will recognize that as a group, they must promptly do something. A baffling and confusing compromise will be hammered out and agreed upon. Given the extremity of the moment and the compelling belief that more judgments are forthcoming, each religious leader will be forced by circumstances to compromise his fundamental beliefs so the group can appear united as one voice for appeasing God's wrath. Given the horrific destruction caused by the first four trumpets, the group will create three lies and justify them as necessary steps to save the world from further manifestations of God's wrath.

The First Lie

The first lie will be *"Everyone on Earth worships the same God, even though we worship Him in different ways and call Him by different names and titles."* People around the world will accept this lie because most of them do not know enough about other religions to know the truth. Since it is politically and religiously inflammatory to declare any God a false god, this inclusive lie will

be a convenient way to get around prickly questions about which god is angry. Furthermore, the survivors will be so traumatized that most of them will go along with whatever the experts say. Since most of the leaders will be advocating the same argument, the lie will make sense to many people. This will reveal an interesting irony. As the 144,000 give the testimony of Jesus Christ, Jesus Himself will condemn the different gods of the world. Speaking through the 144,000, He will tell the world that He alone is God, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5,6) He will tell the survivors that He sent the first four trumpet judgments. He will inform the world that He is returning soon to save those who obey His gospel and to destroy everyone else. Of course, in the early days of the Great Tribulation, most people will not realize that Jesus is speaking through the 144,000. The world will think the 144,000 are crazy.

A Second Lie

Religious leaders will then advocate another lie: *“We have all observed that God’s wrath fell on notably wicked places in every nation. This clearly indicates that we are accountable to God for our actions and He is deeply offended by the sinful and decadent ways of all mankind. Therefore, we can only appease God’s wrath and restore His favor if we repent and change our ways. We cannot continue doing things that are offensive to Him.”* Think about their claim for a moment: *“Therefore, we can only appease God’s wrath and restore His favor, if . . .”* This assertion is completely false, but the religious leaders will not know that they are wrong and neither will most of the survivors!

If the religious leaders of the world properly understood the books of Daniel and Revelation, they would know God’s plans. They would know that mankind cannot stop God’s wrath once it is activated and after the fourth trumpet judgment, no more judgments would be imminently forthcoming! As I calculate it, the fifth trumpet will occur about two and one-half years after the fourth trumpet. Because religious leaders were caught off guard by the first four trumpets, they will think more judgments are imminent and they can do something to stop them! This will be the motive for creating the seven-headed beast mentioned in Revelation 13:1. The seven-headed beast will be a crisis government that religious leaders from the seven religious systems of the world will direct. Their goal will be the appeasement of God’s wrath so that His judgments will end. However, they will be insulting God. Revelation 13:1 highlights this irony by indicating that a blasphemous name is written on each of the beast’s seven heads.

Even though the religious systems of the world are different, they are alike in many ways. Each system is self-assured and convinced that it *knows* God and His will better than the other systems. Each religious system has its own experts in matters pertaining to God, so the world will be closely watching the clergy when God’s wrath becomes an issue of paramount importance. Each religious system will look to their clergy for explanation, guidance, and comfort. Unfortunately, the result will be “the blind leading the blind.” (Matthew 15:14) This is why the Bible says the world will follow after the beast as it leads the way into blasphemy! (Revelation 13:3)

If you are reading this book during the Great Tribulation, you should know that once the angel casts down the censer in Heaven’s temple (Revelation 8:5), corporate intercession for mankind ends and Jesus will never resume this intercession. This means that once God’s wrath begins,

it cannot be stopped. God's wrath will follow an unconditional course ending when the world is destroyed at the Second Coming. Once the 1,335 days allotted for the seven trumpets and seven bowls begin, praying and repentance will have no effect on staying or changing the remaining plagues. There will be no turning back. To put this matter in perspective, we can be sure there was a lot of praying and repentance in Noah's day when the rain started to fall. However, the crying, praying, and repentance did not stop the flood. There will be no more mercy for the world (corporately speaking) once God's wrath begins even though there will be mercy for individuals! For the first 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will speak through the 144,000 offering salvation to everyone willing to accept His terms and conditions.

The Third Lie

The leaders of the seven-headed beast will create a third lie to justify their *extreme* solution for dealing with God's wrath. Even if they cannot resolve their theological differences, they will reason that *if* they eliminate behaviors that God deems offensive, His wrath will end! The clergy will also conclude that a global reformation can only happen *if all* of the political leaders of the world will give them unfettered authority to accomplish this objective. They will think they can dictate the needed changes and the political leaders can implement their demands. The devil will jump into the mix to make their suggestion and ambition appear doable. He will give miracle-working powers to some of the clergy. (Matthew 7:21,22; Revelation 13:2) These astonishing miracles will convince the political leaders of the world that God is calling for a dramatic change. Jesus warned, **"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect -- if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time."** (Matthew 24:24,25)

In Catholic and Protestant countries, priests and pastors will make the following argument: "Ever since time began, God has chosen and given authority to certain people to teach and lead others in spiritual matters. Before Noah's flood, there were the patriarchs. After the Exodus, God selected the Levites to serve as His priests and teachers. After God established the Christian church, He chose certain people to serve as priests, pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Every religious system on Earth has similarly appointed spiritual leaders. Therefore, after consulting with the religious and political leaders of the world, we have all agreed on a solution that will appease God's wrath. We have created a new government that will appease God's wrath in each nation. This new government will provide direction through its laws and the political leaders of the world will enforce them. Repentance and reformation is mandatory if we want the favor and blessings of Almighty God."

The Clergy Will Use Martial Law

During the first four trumpets and before the seven-headed beast takes control, the world's political leaders will declare martial law. Governmental leaders declare martial law in times of crisis when issues require instant decisions. Hundreds of legislators or members of parliament cannot meet, deliberate, and make decisions, because the situation is just too fluid. Martial law is important to this story because without martial law the political leaders of the world would not be able to single-handedly surrender their respective nations to the authority of the crisis government (the seven-headed beast), which the clergy will create. With martial law in place,

political leaders can do this without the consent or deliberation normally used by legislators, parliaments, or congresses! The freedoms and inalienable rights guaranteed by charters and constitutions are set aside so that presidents, prime ministers, and governors can govern without impediment. Dire circumstances and fear of more coming judgments will cause the political leaders of the world to surrender to the directives of the seven-headed beast. This beast, that comes up out of the sea in Revelation 13:1, will be man's united response to God's wrath and this is how it will spring to life. Through martial law, the beast will be *given* (gifted with) authority over **“every tribe, people, language and nation.”** (Revelation 13:7) Unfortunately, history proves that church/state governments are horrible forms of government. Typically, they are far more intolerant and cruel than the worst secular governments.

When religion dictates the laws of a nation, the misery of its citizens always increases. The environment will become hostile and intolerable, especially for those who love God and His Word. Those who cherish the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience have nowhere to go in a religiously dominated state. There is no personal freedom to worship God in a church/state unless your religion is the dictating religion. Even then, when a church/state determines God's will for its subjects, this does not mean everyone within that religious body will agree on what God's will is. Nothing is more grinding and insufferable than one man cramming his religious views down the throat of another man, even if the two belong to the same religious system.

In recent years, the world has witnessed the inhumane and gruesome behaviors of the Taliban in Afghanistan and ISIS in Iraq and Syria. God has placed both of these governments on display to show the world the atrocities of a church/state theocracy. They are prophetic samples of the seven-headed beast! This revelation is not new. Consider the destruction caused during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922 - 9.5 million deaths), by Nazi Germany (1935-1945 - 7 million), and by Mao Zedong's regime (1949-1975 - 45 million)! When civil power rests in the hands of a few hardline religious or political leaders who are determined to control their subjects' behavior and thoughts, history reveals that dissenters receive deadly consequences.

Europe has had a well-documented history with church/state governments. For 1,260 years (from emperor Justinian to Napoleon - A.D. 538-1798), Europe's political leaders were subservient to the clergy of the Catholic Church. Many millions of Protestants who resisted the teachings of the Church during the middle ages were killed, tortured, and imprisoned. This is a historical fact that many Europeans seem to have forgotten. Since World War II, the Jews have attempted to maintain the awareness that six million of them died during the Holocaust. However, Protestants today have largely forgotten the cruelty of the Dark Ages. During the past 200 years, Protestants have allowed the long struggle for religious freedom and the price paid for religious freedom to be subverted by a false gospel; a gospel that many martyrs of the reformation would consider heresy today.

The Powers of a Pope

When the seven-headed beast forms, Revelation 13 indicates the religious and/or political leaders will elect the pope to lead the new government. The pope will not serve as a great king ruling over a united kingdom; instead, he will be *“primus inter pares,”* a Latin phrase meaning

“first among equals.” An illustration of the idea of “first among equals” is the Gulf War. In the 1990’s, the United States and 31 nations formed a coalition to engage Iraq and Afghanistan in a war on terror. After considering the price paid in lost lives and the monetary value of the assets involved, one can say of the Gulf War that the U.S. was “first among equals” relative to the other nations. Although the pope will be “first among equals,” the seven-headed beast will have seven heads. Each head will represent a large block of people (such as Islam or Protestantism) and, of course, the pope will represent his religious system.

Several Catholic scholars anticipate a day is coming when a pope will lead the world in a unified religious reformation! For example, the late Dr. Malachi Martin (1921-1999), a Jesuit scholar and author of over fifteen books, wrote that a prophecy received by a child would be fulfilled during the days when Pope John Paul II was alive. Here is the story: On April 4, 1919, the Virgin Mary is alleged to have appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal. Supposedly, the Virgin Mary gave each child a secret message concerning the Catholic Church. The third secret message was not published during his lifetime, but Dr. Martin reported that Pope John Paul II read the message. Dr. Martin believed the third message covered three main topics. He wrote, “A physical chastisement of the nations, involving catastrophes, man-made or natural, on land, on water and in the atmosphere of the globe [is coming upon the world]. A spiritual chastisement, far more frightening and distressing – especially for Roman Catholics – than physical hardship, since it would consist of the disappearance of religious belief, a period of widespread unfaith in many countries. . . [However, he adds], the physical and spiritual chastisements, according to Lucia’s letter [one of the three children alleged to see the Virgin Mary], are to be gridded on a fateful timetable in which Russia is the ratchet.” (Martin, Malachi (1990) *The Keys of This Blood*, NY: Simon and Schuster, pp. 630-631, insertions in brackets mine) Dr. Martin believed the third secret message required whoever was pope in 1960 (actually Pope John XXIII) to publish the text of the “Third Secret” for the whole world to read and know. Then, the Pope, with all his bishops acting collegially, should consecrate Russia to Mary. “If these requests [the two conditions, publishing the third letter in 1960 and consecrating Russia to Mary] were denied, the chastisements would then follow as surely as night follows day.” (Martin, p. 631, insertion in brackets mine) Since neither condition was fulfilled, Dr. Martin was convinced the two chastisements would occur during the reign of Pope John Paul II, who was aware of the third secret message.

Dr. Martin continues, “He [Pope John Paul II] is waiting, rather, for an event that will fission human history, splitting the immediate past from the oncoming future. It will be an event on public view in the skies, in the oceans, and on the continental landmasses of this planet. It will particularly involve our human sun, which every day lights up and shines upon the valleys, the mountains and the plains of this earth for our eyes. . . Fissioning it will be as an event, in John Paul’s conviction of faith, for it will immediately nullify all the grand designs the nations are now forming and will introduce the Grand Design of man’s Maker. John Paul’s waiting and watching time will then be over. His ministry as the Servant of the Grand Design will then begin. His strength of will to hold on and continue, and then, when the fissioning event occurs, to assume that ministry, derives directly from the Petrine authority entrusted solely to him the day he became Pope, in October of 1978. That authority, that strength, is symbolized in the Keys of Peter, washed in the human blood of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. John Paul is and will be the sole possessor of the Key of this Blood on that day.” (Martin, p. 639, insertion in brackets mine)

Even though Dr. Martin's expectations have not been fulfilled and the basis for his prophetic views are suspect, his anticipation of a "fissioning event" is not as far out as one might think. Revelation 7 describes four angels holding back God's wrath until the 144,000 are selected and sealed. Revelation 8 describes four horrific judgments that will occur, and Revelation 13 describes the rise of a seven-headed beast designed by the religious leaders of the world to appease God's wrath. These are circumstances that will catapult the Roman Catholic Church into a leading role. Revelation 13:3 says that one of the seven heads seemed to have had a deadly wound, "**but the fatal wound had been healed.**" This specification points backward to a time when the papacy ruled over the kings of Europe and forward to a time when the papacy will rule over the seven heads as "first among equals." A little background explanation may be helpful.

For over 1,000 years, the pope and clergy of the Catholic Church crowned the kings and queens of Europe. The Church wielded enormous influence over Europe. However, the Catholic Church received a deadly wound in 1798 when Napoleon refused to recognize the pope's civil (political) powers and the pope refused to give them up. Napoleon's forces confiscated the Vatican in February 1798, arrested Pope Pius VI, and sent him to France where he died six weeks later. On the surface, the fall of the papacy in 1798 seems to be a forgotten footnote in the history of the Catholic Church. Today, we know that when Napoleon captured the Vatican and exiled the pope, the papacy's church/state powers over Europe and elsewhere quickly waned. For example, the Latin American Inquisitions (inquiries to determine who was a loyal Catholic) ended between 1813 and 1825; the Portuguese Inquisition ended in 1821; the Spanish Inquisition ended in 1834; and in Italy, the Papal States Inquisition ended in the well-publicized Mortara Affair (1858-1870). ([wake-up.org/?p=7481](https://www.wake-up.org/?p=7481))

Since 1929, the Catholic Church has risen to global prominence. Its recovery began when Mussolini restored Vatican City to the Church in the Lateran Accords (February 1929). Today, the Catholic Church claims more than 1.5 billion members and its popes often meet with heads of state around the world. If you think it through, the pope's coming advancement as "first among equals" is not hard to anticipate. No other religious system on Earth is globally organized and politically recognized like the Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church is unique among the religious systems of the world in that it currently has diplomatic relations with 179 countries. ([wake-up.org/?p=7483](https://www.wake-up.org/?p=7483)) Its well-established network will be a tremendous asset during the worldwide crisis caused by the first four trumpets. The one religious organization that can facilitate and coordinate matters around the world will make the sitting pope (whoever he is), "first among equals."

Church vs. State

During Old Testament times, God established a system of government in which Israel's kings sat on the throne and a high priest served in the temple. God did not permit any one person to have authority over church *and* state. When arrogant king Uzziah attempted to cross the line and officiate at the altar, God struck him with leprosy. (2 Chronicles 26:16-21) Judaism and Protestantism have historically advocated for a line of separation between church and state, but the Catholic Church, Islam, and other religious systems do not. For example, Muslims often prefer Sharia law and prior to 1798, Catholics preferred Church law. Of course, when a

church/state is impossible because of monarchies, democracies, and dictatorships, religious systems settle for whatever influence and advantages they may find.

The religious leaders of the Catholic Church dominated the nations of Europe for 1,260 years. The root of this domination began centuries earlier when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and wiped out the headquarters of Christianity. Since the Christian Church had no central authority or hierarchy, it flourished in different locations and under different leaders. As time passed, groups of Christians began to have theological differences. For example, early Christians in Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome came to different conclusions about the deity of Jesus. They also differed on matters of Christian conduct and orthodoxy necessary for salvation. This diversity became controversial and during the third century A.D., the church in Rome began to hold councils to codify the beliefs and practices of Christians. The church in Rome also assumed authority over the formation of a creed which constituted Christian doctrine. Some of the early churches within the empire went along with the church at Rome, but others rebelled. This caused a growing need to stem heresy and to better consolidate the Christian faith into one cohesive body of knowledge.

To justify its assumed authority, the church in Rome was the first to advocate the idea that God had given one man authority over the Catholic Church. The word catholic, as used here, means universal, as in the universal Christian church. They claimed this authority through a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples. **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You [singular] are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, *Simon son of Jonah*, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven.’ ”** (Matthew 16:13-17, insertion and italics mine)

On this occasion, Jesus had an important reason for confronting the disciples with His identity. When Jesus asked the question, the Father through the Holy Spirit instantly put words in Peter’s mouth, causing Peter to plainly state to the other disciples that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. These words were shocking for the disciples because the Jews believed a son was the equal of his father. (John 5:18) Therefore, when Peter declared Jesus to be the equal of Almighty God, the disciples were stunned!

This event occurred just before Jesus announced that *He* was establishing a new religious system called “the church.” The Father made sure that Jesus was properly identified before Jesus made the announcement. This is why the Father spoke through Peter. The Father also designed that Peter’s bold declaration would help Jews to abandon their synagogues later on.

Jesus replied to Peter using his formal name, “Simon son of Jonah.” Jesus then proceeded to use two Greek words, “petros” and “petra,” to disclose a divine truth. Turning to Peter, Jesus said, **“And I tell you that you are Peter** [Greek: *petros*, a piece of a rock or a small stone], **and** [then declaring of Himself, He said, but] **on this rock** [Greek: *petra*, a massive rock, actually the Rock (the Petra) of Israel] **I will build my church, and the gates of Hades** [even the grave] **will not overcome it.**” (Matthew 16:18, insertions mine)

Jesus used the words, *petros* and *petra*, only after Peter divulged His identity, because the Jews were well acquainted with the idea and the phrase, “The *Petra* of Israel.” (Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:18; 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalm 18:31; 1 Corinthians 10:4) The disciples grew up believing in monotheism (e.g., one God exists and His name is Jehovah). They did not realize until this moment there was more than one God. Suddenly, they learned that Jesus, the Son of God, the *Petra* of Israel, was the God of the Old Testament! Can you imagine their surprise? Standing before them and in their presence was the Rock of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Jesus continued speaking to His disciples, **“I will give you [and to all who believe in Me] the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven.”** (Matthew 16:19, insertion mine)

Centuries later, church leaders in Rome interpreted Matthew 16:18 to mean that Jesus gave one disciple and presumably his successors “all authority” over matters on Earth. This is why, through the ages, popes have been called “The Vicar [substitute] of Christ.” Catholics believe Jesus has given the popes sovereign power to bind or loosen anything on Earth. Dr. Malachi Martin affirmed this belief. Naturally, after the church made the claim, it has tenaciously defended this idea and the assumed power that goes with it. A superficial reader of the Bible might easily reach the same conclusion after reading Matthew 16:18,19. Therefore, it is no surprise that today many sincere Catholics believe that Jesus gave Peter and his successors “all authority” over matters on Earth.

What Did Jesus Mean with Peter and the Rock?

The Bible tells a different story than Catholic theology presents. There is no evidence in the Bible showing the disciples understood that Jesus gave Peter any special authority on that occasion. In fact, after Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, he went on to deny Jesus three times. Then, years later, Paul reprimanded Peter for treating Gentile believers as if they were not members of Jesus’ church. (Galatians 2:14)

Peter is not mentioned as the president or leader of the Christian faith in the New Testament, and the latest books in the New Testament were written after Peter’s death. Furthermore, the first president of the Christian church was James, not Peter. (Galatians 2:9-12; Acts 15:13) In fact, if one disciple stands out above the others in the New Testament as Jesus’ favorite, it would have to be John. The Bible identifies John as “the disciple that Jesus loved” four times.

Looking outside the Bible, early church history indicates Christians did not understand or use Matthew 16 to promote the authority of one man until the fourth century. Christian leaders in other countries were dismayed when the church in Rome began using this argument in its effort to consolidate control over doctrine and to establish its authority over everything called “Christian.” When Justinian (A.D. 482-565) took the throne of what was left of the Roman Empire, he, not the pope, created the “Holy Roman Empire.” In A.D. 476, the ancient Roman Empire was destroyed and fractured into ten kingdoms. In a bid to rebuild and unite the ancient Roman Empire, Justinian, in A.D. 533, gave Pope Silverius the power to determine who was an orthodox Christian and who was a heretic. A few years later, Justinian forced Pope Silverius out of office and installed someone he could trust, Pope Vigilius. Little did Justinian realize that in

giving the pope the task of deciding who was an orthodox believer, he gave away the throne of the Holy Roman Empire. A succession of popes became the ultimate authority over monarchs and queens for more than a thousand years.

About 1450, Gutenberg invented the printing press which enabled him to publish the first mass-produced book, a 1,202 page edition of the Christian Bible. Bibles were distributed among Catholic laymen and after studying the New Testament for themselves, they began to demand reformation within the Church. They discovered the church had deviated significantly from the gospel of Jesus. The Bible exposed many church errors and lies. In 1517, Martin Luther highlighted many church errors when he nailed his 95 theses to the church door of Wittenberg Castle. The church tried to capture him and put him to death for heresy, but powerful people protected Luther. If the church could not arrest him and put him to death, it could at least keep him from receiving eternal life by denying him access to the sacraments (rituals). Although this bit of background history on the pope's authority may seem unimportant, it has been included because the Catholic Church and its pope will use the words of Jesus improperly. The pope will be selected as the "first among equals" because the Catholic Church is the only religious system having diplomatic relations with most nations. His appointment and authority will be immediately respected by 1.5 billion Catholics because of the historical way Catholics interpret Matthew 16.

When Jesus said to His disciples, "**I will give you** [, not meaning Peter alone, but to all of my disciples] **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**" (Matthew 16:19, insertion mine), Jesus had an important purpose for doing so. Jesus meant that in His absence, His followers, the members of His church, would have authority for self-direction and self-determination. (John 16:12-15) Jesus also promised the Holy Spirit would sustain and guide the church to ensure that His church would endure until His return. Through the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus would lead His followers into greater truth. The church of Jesus was not founded on *petros*, a small stone; Jesus founded His church upon Himself, *petra*, The Eternal Rock of Ages. He has the power over life and death (*Hades*, the grave). (Revelation 1:18) Jesus decentralized the authority of His church so that no man could have authority over everyone else! (Acts 15:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:17) Most religious systems in the world today are decentralized when it comes to spiritual authority. For example, Muslims have many imams, even Grand Mufti's, but no one imam has authority over all Muslims. The same is also true for Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and Protestants.

Nagging Question of How to Appease God

We have considered some background information on the origin of the Christian Church, the wounding of the papacy in 1798, and the forthcoming selection of a pope as the leader of the seven-headed beast. Now, consider this: After the seven-headed beast comes to power and no further judgments will occur for two and a half years, the clergy leading the seven-headed beast will soon take credit for having appeased God's wrath and saving the world! They will boast that their solution was the *right solution* because no more judgments have fallen. However, their solution will do nothing but insult God and hurt His saints! "**He** [the seven-headed beast] **was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.**" (Revelation 13:7)

Of course, there will be some need for coordination, cooperation, and compromise among the

seven religious systems of the world, but there will also be *endless confusion* and disturbing conflicts. For example, Muslim representatives will direct Muslim nations on how to best appease God's wrath. Catholic and Protestant representatives will direct those nations that have Catholic or Protestant majorities. Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Atheist leaders will do the same for their nations. The seven-headed beast will exercise great power over the nations and many people will foolishly believe that God has ordained the crisis government. Religious leaders and false prophets will perform counterfeit signs and miracles, and their lies will be convincing. However, the clergy of the seven religious systems will not be able to answer one nagging question: If there is *one* angry God, how can He be appeased in seven different ways? Remember, the first of the three great lies is "There is only one God having different titles." Logic suggests there must be only *one* way to appease *one* God.

The Abuse of Law

The primary work of the seven-headed beast will be that of crafting "sin-less" laws; e.g., laws forbidding conduct that God deems offensive. The political leaders of the nations will direct their law enforcement agencies to impose and enforce these laws, street by street, block by block. In effect, police with a religious mandate will patrol the whole world, a practice exercised in some Muslim countries today. The Muslim enforcers are known as moral or religious police. There will be no due process for those arrested. Congresses and parliaments will have no authority. Martial law puts absolute authority in the hands of a very small number of people. Just a few religious and political leaders will control the whole world and the devil will control these leaders. (Revelation 13:2) The result will be the abuse of law, and a war against those who honor the law of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:17)

Summary

First, World War III will occur. There will be nuclear exchanges and millions of people will perish. Then, during the mayhem of this war, Jesus will select and seal 144,000 people to serve as His prophets. Then, Jesus will say, "**There will be no more delay!**" Signs in the Heavens and the Earth will follow and there will be a global earthquake. World War III will end abruptly when God's wrath begins. The first four angels will sound their trumpets and four devastating judgments will occur. One-third of Earth will be annihilated, then two civilization-threatening asteroids will impact our planet, and finally, hundreds of volcanoes will erupt. These events will create trauma and panic among the survivors. Many people will tremble at the power and majesty of God; they will literally fear God!

Martial law will be quickly imposed throughout the nations of the world as each political leader scrambles to manage his crisis. Realizing that God has fatally harmed the whole world and that two billion people are either missing, dead, or dying, world leaders will create a crisis government (the seven-headed beast) to appease God's wrath. Believing that more judgments are imminently coming, the political leaders of the world will agree to implement the demands of a united clergy. The clergy will claim the only way to appease the Almighty is to eliminate all immoral and offensive behavior. Jesus will speak through the 144,000 who will stand in opposition to the efforts and declarations of the seven-headed beast. There will be great confusion and conflict. The seven-headed beast will dictate many silly laws to appease God's

wrath and in turn, the political leaders will work through their civil authorities to enforce these laws. Everyone will obey the laws of the seven-headed beast or be punished. Bible prophecy presents this scenario in the clearest of terms: **“He [the seven-headed beast] was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”** (Revelation 13:7, insertion mine)

The Father carefully designed this scenario thousands of years ago to force our diverse world together to appease a God that most of the world does not even know, respect, or worship. The irony is that during this upheaval the world will learn that the God who has devastated the world, ruined the nations, and killed two billion people is, Jesus Christ, our Creator. He made us, He owns us, and He deserves our worship. The 144,000 will tell the world that Jesus Christ is Sovereign God and the Savior of mankind! (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Revelation 14:7) This will be an extremely difficult fact for people in many quadrants of Earth to accept.

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