

Bowing to the Beast - Lesson 14 of 21 - Landmarks of Prophecy

I want to welcome you, again, to this special presentation of the Landmarks of Prophecy. And today we have a study talking about bowing to the beast. The subject today is a very serious one and I just invite you to be praying as I share, that it's really God's Spirit that we're going to hear speaking to our hearts. You know, I like to sometimes begin with an amazing fact and when we speak about the Landmarks of Prophecy, one of the great landmarks was an ancient wonder of the civilization - of the ancient civilizations - you've heard of the Seven Wonders of the World - it was called the Colossus of Rhodes. The Colossus of Rhodes was built about 280 B.C. by the people of Rhodes to celebrate their victory over one of the Greek kings that they had been fighting against and it was one of the most massive, if not the largest of the ancient statues. Made of bronze, glimmered in the sun, a hundred feet tall, some historians - I think it was Herodotus - said that ships would sail underneath its legs. It straddled the harbor there in Rhodes. And it stood for about sixty years and there was an earthquake and it tumbled and it was never reassembled. But for many years it was recognized as one of the wonders of the world. But it's not the only great burnished statue that appears in Bible history. And we're going to talk a little bit about that.

Lesson #14 dealing with the subject of 'Bowing to the Beast.' And it's based upon a story that we've already touched on, beginning in Daniel chapter 2. You remember King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a giant image and it wasn't like that Colossus of Rhodes. That was actually dedicated to the sun god Helios but - by the way, whenever you use the word 'colossal' - the word 'colossal' comes from the 'Colossus' of Rhodes. Anything that was just of immense proportions, we talk about it as being colossal. Well, Nebuchadnezzar had this dream of a colossal image - remember, the head was of gold? It outlines the history of the world - gives us those Landmarks of Prophecy - silver, Medo-Persia, bronze - belly - was Greece, the iron legs, Rome, feet of iron and clay the break-up of the Roman Empire.

Nebuchadnezzar liked the part of it where it said, 'You are this head of gold.' But he didn't like the other part of the interpretation that said, "And after thee arise another kingdom inferior to thee." Nebuchadnezzar - we know from bricks that he stamped - he said, 'This is Babylon that I have built. May it last forever.' He didn't want another kingdom to displace him. So he came up with an idea. He thought, if that great image - that great statue that I've dreamed of, represents the kingdoms of the world, if the top being gold represents Babylon, what if I make what I saw in that dream, except make it all gold? And I'll tell the whole world, 'This is going to be the god that we worship.' Babylon will last forever.' He thought he could somehow change the dream by doing this - a very driven king.

So that's just what he did. He made an image of gold and it was probably the biggest one that's ever been made in history. Ninety feet tall and, actually, it tells us - we get it in the Hebrew measurements - it's sixty cubits by six cubits. Now, you know in the Bible when it doesn't give the depth that's because, if it gives the width, the depth will be the same. Notice: sixty cubits by six cubits - and then it's understood - by six cubits. It's like the new Jerusalem - the length, the breadth and the height of it are the same. And so many scholars believe that this thing was sixty by six by six.

Does that sound familiar? And then he tells everybody - gathers the who's who in his empire and they all come to the plains of Dura and he's got the whole massive orchestra there. And he waits till the right moment, as the sun is coming up and it's covered with a sheet and he tells everybody that 'When we unveil this statue and you hear the music, everybody must bow down and worship. We're going to unite the empire of Babylon through common worship.' Is the beast power going to try that in the last days? And so, he gives the signal, the music plays, and everybody bows down.

Now, there was a little encouragement. He said, 'And if you don't bow down, you see that furnace we used over there to forge this image? It's still got coals in it. We'll fire that up and you're going to get thrown in the furnace if you do not bow down and worship my image. So there's a death decree if you

do not worship. Does that sound like Revelation? "And who so falls not down and worships, the same hour will be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace. So they played the music and almost everybody bowed down, except there were three Hebrews. Nebuchadnezzar knew who they were. He respected them - three of his counselors - their names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah - Hebrew names. Babylonian names - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And they could not bow down. Why not? One of the Ten Commandments says you will not make a graven image and bow down to it. It's very clear.

And they said, 'We have to choose. Do we obey God or do we obey man? And they might have argued within themselves and said, 'You know, the King's been good to us and he's given us good positions and raises, and just out of gratitude, one time we ought to bow down. Just once. And if not that, yeah, maybe we should at least stoop down and tie our sandals so we don't look like we're trying to wreck his whole party. Just compromise a little bit. We'll be praying to God in our hearts but we'll just bow down when everyone else does.' I mean, they could have rationalized a thousand ways, but they would not compromise and they stood tall. The Lord accomplished, through those three young men, that day on the plains of Dura, what He had been wanting to do through the Hebrew nation for hundreds of years. He had them stand up for Him among the pagans and glorify God.

Nebuchadnezzar was outraged. He said, 'Did I get it right that you wouldn't bow down? I tell you what, I'll give you another chance. Maybe you didn't hear it. I don't want to lose you guys. When I play the music - we'll play it one more time - you bow down or you're going to the fiery furnace. And who's going to - what God is it that's going to save you?' He knew they worshiped Jehovah. What God is going to save you from my hand? One of them answered and said, 'We're not going to bow down. You don't need to play the music again. And if our God wants, who we serve, He can deliver us from your hand, o king.' I have a friend who struggled with terminal cancer. And he said, 'Doug, I've prayed about it. But I found peace in the words of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.' He said, 'I know God can heal me, but even if He doesn't heal me, I'm going to serve Him.' And that was the attitude of these young men. "But if not, be it known unto thee, king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

We need that kind of resolve if we're going to survive the last days, because the same kind of test is going to come to God's people regarding the law of God and who we worship and we need to make sure we're not bowing to Babylon in the last days. Nebuchadnezzar was in a rage. And in his fury, even as much as he loved these young men, he said, 'How dare you talk to me like that. I'm the king. This is a government law.' He had them all tied up just as they were, in their robes. Strongest men in the kingdom charged to the mouth of this furnace that was heated up seven times hotter than it should have been heated. The waves of heat were just wafting out. And even the soldiers that threw them in - it was so hot and the King's command so urgent that, as they got near enough to toss them in, they were scorched to death and dropped dead on the spot.

You've got to think about that for a second. Suppose that you're one of the teams of soldiers that had to grab one of those three Hebrews and you see that when the first two soldiers run to the mouth and they throw in Shadrach, they drop dead. And the King said, 'Next!' You've got to, now, know that in order to get him in to fulfill the king's law, you may die. They were willing to die for the king of Babylon, doing the wrong thing. A lot of people in the world are willing to die - suicide missions - believing the wrong thing. Am I right? So just because you're willing to die for your belief doesn't make it truth.

All three of them were thrown in the furnace and then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" And his advisors said, 'That's true, o king.' the king, peering off into the furnace, he said, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and... The form of the fourth is like the Son of God." You may go through fiery trials when you stand up for Jesus, but the good news is you don't go alone. Just like God sent His angel to Daniel and the lion's den, Jesus will come to

you during your time of trial. He said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' Amen?

Now, that same test is something we're going to face in the last days. If you have your Bibles, I thought, as an introduction to this, it'd probably be a good idea to go to Revelation 13. Let the Bible speak for itself. I'm going to read the first few verses here - give us context - and you tell me if it doesn't sound similar to Daniel chapter 3. Revelation 13, verse 1, "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns," - you know, in Daniel, it talks about ten horns - "and having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard," - there's a leopard in Daniel - "his feet were like the feet of a bear," - there's a bear in Daniel - "and his mouth like the mouth of a lion" - again, Daniel 7 - "the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And he was given a mouth speaking great things' - Daniel talks about this beast power speaking great things - pompous words - "and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months." - Same time period you find in the book of Daniel - that's one thousand two hundred and sixty days, or three and a half years. "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven." - He's speaking against the truth of God - "it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them." - It's a persecuting power - "and authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation." - It's an international power - "all who dwell on the earth will worship him," - it's a religious power" - whose names have not been written in the book of life of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world." - He is obviously in opposition to those who serve God - "if anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Now, we all hear about the mark of the beast, right? Revelation 13 - there are two beasts - notice verse 11, "Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth," - the first one comes up out of the sea. This beast comes - "up out of the earth and he had two horns like a lamb" - a lamb's a good thing, but he - "spoke like a dragon." - a dragon's a bad thing - "and he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship" - this second beast is powerful enough to force the rest of the world to worship - "the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword" - sword is the Word of God - "and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."

Again, death decree if you don't worship. Sound familiar? - "He causes all," - this is universal - "both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom." - He's saying, 'Now, if you're smart you'll be able to spot what this power is' - "Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: his number is 666."

Okay, with that as a background let me tell you what I'm going to say. Then I'll tell you. Then I'll tell you what I said. These two beasts - first, let me ask you a question. There's a verse in the Bible that says, 'Am I your enemy if I tell you the truth?' Now, I'm asking you. Are you going to be mad at me if I tell you the truth? Some medicine is hard to take and this is - this is a tough subject, but I need to be honest with you and tell you what the Bible says. You want to hear the truth?

These two beasts represent the powers of the Roman Catholic church, based in Europe, and the United States and Protestants, based in North America. Now, that covered just about everybody in the room and everybody watching. Not everybody, but many. I'm a Protestant. I live in the U.S. I'm a loyal American. I believe the first beast is talking about the Roman Catholic Church.

The second beast in verse 11 is speaking of the United States. We have another whole study on the second beast that's coming. Right now I want to use the Bible and see if what I'm sharing with you is accurate about the first beast. Now, when you say a beast in the Bible - well, actually - that'll be in the lesson. I'll just hold that thought and we'll get to it when we get to it.

Question #1: How does our story in Daniel relate to Revelation? We already saw this. Revelation chapter 13, verse 15, "As many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." It's easy to say, 'Oh, I'd give my life for Jesus.' But when you're really brought to the spot, could you do it? It's so easy for us to rationalize and postpone and say, 'I can't do it today. I'll just worship the beast a little bit, but I'll change my mind later.' We've got to know ahead of time what the beast is and that we're not going to compromise our convictions. It's a death decree. It doesn't get any more serious than that.

Question #2: Now what are the three angels' messages in Revelation 14? First of all, what chapter did I just read to you out of the Bible? Chapter 13. The next chapter tells about messages that go to the world before Jesus comes. Because in chapter 14 Jesus comes. There's at least one image of Jesus coming there. Let's look at these messages.

It talks about three angels give messages to the world and they summarize a message that's to go to the world just before Jesus comes. Very quickly, in Revelation 14, verse 7, this angel comes down from heaven and he says, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment" - will come or is come? Is come. "Is come;" - this is a message that comes to the world in the last stage of the world's history. In Revelation chapter 2 and 3 - if you were here, you caught it, I said the church history is divided up in several parts. The last phase of church history is the church of Laodicea.

We're living in that phase of church history now. It's when people think they're rich and increased with goods but they don't know that they're poor, and wretched, miserable, blind and naked. The church is - do you know there are more people in the world now that are dying from over-eating than under-eating? First time in history. Diabetes - you can ask Dr. DeRose more about that.

We think we're rich and increased with goods - don't know what our real spiritual condition is. The word Laodicea means 'a judging of the people.' So this is a message that goes out during this last phase. Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary for His last phase of His priestly ministry as our High Priest. And the message that goes is 'the hour of His judgment has come'. We all agree, when Jesus comes, He's giving rewards, right? Some are caught up - they're saved. Some are destroyed by the brightness of His coming. It makes sense some form of judgment takes place before He comes, is that right? The Bible says judgment must begin at the house of God. Peter says that. It's also in Ezekiel 9. There's a judgment that's actually going on now. Doesn't that kind of sober you up a little bit?

The hour of His judgment is come - and these angels go on to say worship Him because we're in this time of judgment. Return to the worship of the true God. "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of waters." Now, you know where you find that phrase in the Old Testament? Most of Revelation can be found in other places in the Bible. That comes from the fourth commandment. You can see it there in Exodus 20, "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." This is a commandment that has largely been forgotten or, at least, neglected by many Christians and it may be the point of controversy in the last days.

Just like you find in Daniel chapter 3, the government makes a law that says you need to break the second commandment about idolatry and you've got to decide, 'Do I worship God or do I break the

second commandment?' Daniel chapter 6, the king makes a law that says everybody must worship Darius instead of God. Daniel has to decide, 'Do I keep the first commandment or do I obey the government law?' In the last days, the devil's going to take one of God's commandments - I believe it's the fourth commandment - and he's going to say, 'Don't worry about that' - even though we know what the Bible says - and tell us to change it. We're going to have to choose between obeying God and obeying men. It has to do with worship.

It says the beast power will think to change times and laws. Only one commandment is both a time and a law. Revelation 14, continuing on with the second angel's message: "And another angel followed, saying," - what is it? - "'Babylon is fallen," - not will fall, it's happening now - "is fallen, that great city," - why? - "Because she" - what does a woman represent in Bible analogy? So if Babylon is a woman, is it a true church or a false - or counterfeit? Or compromised, at least, church? Because she - "has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

And then you come to one of the most fearful messages in the whole New Testament: Revelation 14 - speaking of the third angel's message, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God." So these messages warning us about we're in a time of judgment. We must return to worshipping the true God. Do not worship the beast. Babylon is fallen. Come out of her My people.

Now you see, God has His people right now in many different churches and religions around the world. There - you've heard me say this from the start - my belief is and, you know, I've shared with you I'm a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. My belief is the majority of true Christians are not in my denomination. Do you hear that? I just want to go on record. I believe God has His children in many different churches. But there's going to be a shaking before Jesus comes back and God is going to bring people together. There's only going to be two groups, do we agree? One's going to get the mark of the beast and one is going to have the seal of God. There's going to be a revival among genuine Christians scattered around the world and a desire to return to biblical Christianity. Jesus said, 'All men will know you are my children by your love for one another.' But the devil has brought all kinds of confusion - that's what Babylon is about - the Tower of Babel was confusion. Religious confusion has permeated the churches. All these different doctrines that divide us - we're going to come back on biblical unity based on truth. And this is a message going to the world. After these three messages are given in Revelation 14, next thing that happens, Jesus comes. And so we're seeing this fulfilled in your ears right now. These messages are going to the world. Christ is coming soon.

Question #3: Now, what does a beast represent in Bible prophecies? Whenever I say - don't be angry, friends, but the U.S. Is a beast - people think it's an insult. Well, it could be, but biblically they used beasts to identify nations. You look in Daniel 7, verse 17, "These great" - what? - "beasts, which are four, are four" - what? Four monsters. No - "kingdoms." So when I say that the Catholic church and the United States are beasts, we're not calling them monsters, we're saying they are powers. They are political/religious powers - this is what the Bible says - they were kings or kingdoms. Another verse here, Daniel 7:23, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth."

So when we say 'Mark of the Beast,' most of us are picturing some diabolical-looking horned-hoofed monster. And when you say the U.S. Is one of these beasts in prophecy, people think you're being unpatriotic. Or when you say the Catholic church it means you're speaking against Catholics. I love American people, I'm an American. I am not transferring my citizenship. Do you all hear me? I went to Catholic school. I have a lot of Catholic friends. I love them, but you ought to just use common sense.

What is the largest Christian church in the world? The Roman Catholic church. Does it surprise you that it would appear in prophecy? Did Jesus have people in the Old Testament that were His children? Were the Jews His people? Did they mess up? Did He call them on the carpet and point out their sins? Did He send prophets to tell them and rebuke them for their hypocrisy? Did they do things wrong? Did they

persecute the prophets? Were they His people? Yeah. But He told them straight. So no question God has His people in the Protestant churches of North America, in the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches, but there's some very strong messages about coming back to truth and God does not like it when the truth is distorted and that's what's happened. So you follow me and see if it makes sense. One more proof: you read in Daniel 8, it says, "The ram which you saw, having the two horns - they are the kings of Media and Persia." These beasts represented kingdoms. Daniel 8:21, "The rough goat is the king of Grecia." That was Alexander the Great.

Alright, question #4: so we know what a beast is now. When I talk to you about the eagle, what country is often symbolized by the eagle? United States. And when we say, 'Oh, the bear is having problems with the eagle. Who am I talking about? Russia. And the lion - well several countries claim the lion, but Great Britain is - and when you say the dragon you think China, right? That's what they use. And so we even do that today where we use beasts kind of as a national representation. Did you know Benjamin Franklin wanted the national animal for America to be the turkey? How many of you know that? It's true, yeah. I'm glad he lost that one.

Alright, Revelation 13:1 - now, with that as a background - "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a" - what? - "beast rise up out of the sea," - make a note: sea - because that comes up later. What does the ocean represent? - "having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." When the Roman power crumbled, in the place of the Roman power we saw that there were ten divisions that came up. Remember, the image had ten toes. And so this represents the ten divisions of the Roman empire. But it goes on and it does some interesting things here.

Now the beast that I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion." Those are three animals, in particular, that you find in Daniel chapter 7. It's interesting, though, in Daniel 7 it says, 'lion, bear, leopard.' In Revelation it says it backwards. It says, 'leopard, bear, lion.' Why? Because where John was standing, looking back, he's seeing it the opposite direction of history. It's exactly reversed than from when Daniel did it. He was looking forward to these things.

So it's perfectly sequenced the way the prophets looked at them. And so, those kingdoms represented, of course, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece - and that fourth creature with the iron teeth represented the iron kingdom of Rome. So we're going to look at a number of criteria and quickly identify what is this beast that's being identified? And I told you already, I believe it points to the Roman Catholic power - Roman Catholic church. Several criteria - I think we've got about nine here. Look at the little key indicators. It says it rises up from the sea. It gets its power and seat from the dragon. A worldwide power. It's guilty of blasphemy. It rules for 42 months. It has a deadly wound that heals. It persecutes God's saints and it's connected with the mysterious number 666. Alright, going with that as what our goal is, let's look and see if it matches up to the evidence that is given in prophecy.

Question #5: This beast arises from the sea. What does sea, or water, symbolize, biblically? You can look in Revelation 17. The angel tells John what the waters represent. "The waters which thou sawest ...are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Meaning: this power is rising up from a densely populated center of civilization. Where did the Roman church rise up from? Rome. What was the center of civilization back during that day? Who was it that imprisoned John when he had his vision? Rome. Have you heard the expression 'All roads lead to Minneapolis?' No, that's not how it goes. They all lead to Rome. And so it was the center and it's talking about of many peoples - many nations. Now that's why Paul wanted to go preach in Rome. He ended up dying there, as did Peter. They wanted to go and give the gospel at this fountain of civilization. So that's where it would rise up from.

Question #6: Who gives the beast his power and his position? Revelation 13:2, "And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Now, the dragon - we know who's behind the dragon is principally the devil but, in particular, in Revelation 12, it's also talking about the Roman empire ruled by

the Caesars or pagan Rome. When you look in Revelation 12 - we have another study that's going to go into that - it talks about this beast power, the dragon, trying to kill all the male children in Bethlehem. That's in Revelation 12. What power is it that tried to kill all the baby boys? It was Rome.

Rome - you've got two Romes in prophecy here. You've got Rome that is iron and then you've got Rome that is iron and clay. One is political military, the other is political military religious. Man is made out of clay. You've got one Rome led by Caesars, but then as the Caesars began to decline, in their place the church became legal and now you have Rome led by the church, right? And so this is all it's saying, is the dragon, meaning pagan Rome, ruled by Caesars, gave his seat - handed over the seat - same kingdom, same city, same palace - to the church of Rome. And his authority. We'll show you that from history as we proceed here. Alright, so we see one clue. The dragon or pagan Rome gave his power, seat, and authority to papal Rome, led by the popes.

Now, just reviewing something. How many of you just remember from your elementary history, there was a time when Christians were fed to the lions in Rome. But then all of a sudden, headquarters for the church is in Rome. Something changed. There was a period of time when Christians were persecuted. They had to build catacombs. They went underground. It was against the law to be a Christian. All of a sudden they're the national church. Something radically changed. Well, for several hundred years, up until about 300 A.D., Christianity was called Religio Illicita, meaning 'forbidden religion' and they were persecuted. They went underground. They died for their faith by the thousands - hundreds of thousands. But then Rome began to have a lot of wars - a lot of internal fighting. Along came an emperor by the name of Constantine the Great. His mother, ostensibly, claimed to convert to Christianity. He realized Christians are not as bad as Nero - Nero blamed them for burning Rome. They said that Christians were cannibals. You know why? Because they heard about them saying 'We're eating the flesh and drinking the blood' - during the Lord's supper - not believing they were symbols, they thought they were having these cannibalistic feasts in these secret catacombs.

And so, there was a lot of hatred for Christians back then. They also had a lot of hatred for Jews because the Jews had rebelled against the Roman empire. That's why they sent the Romans down there. They rebelled at Masada. And so Christians wanted to distance themselves from the Jews, for one thing. Constantine realized that Christians, they're not really any threat. He legalized Christianity. Matter of fact, he claimed he had a vision when he was fighting a battle at the bridge with Maximilian. He saw a cross in the sky. He said that God told him to conquer under the sign of the cross. He won the battle. He said that's a sign the whole nation should convert to Christianity. Matter of fact, to prove how sincere he was, he ordered his army to march through the Tiber River. He said, 'You've been baptized now. You're all Christians.' Well, you know, they went into the water dry pagans and they came up wet pagans. They didn't know anything about what it meant to be a Christian. We talked about, you know, like I was baptized the first time and got drunk that night. I had no idea what was involved. And so these pagans that were told 'Now you're Christians,' they brought all their pagan beliefs into the church.

One commentator from history - this is Abbott's Roman History - he said, "The transfer of the emperor's residence to Constantinople" - Constantinople named after Constantine - "was a sad blow to the prestige of Rome, and at the time one might have predicted her speedy decline. But" - when the Emperor Justinian transferred the headquarters from Rome to Constantinople, you would have thought, the city of Rome is no longer the capital, it's just going to fall apart. But, historians tell us, "the development of the church, and the growing authority of the bishop of Rome, or the Pope, gave her (Rome) a new lease on life, and made her again the capital" - of the religious - the capital of the world - "This time the religious capital - of the civilized world." And we know from history that's exactly what happened. That's why it's not just called the Christian church or even the Catholic church, but it's called the Roman Catholic church.

How did the headquarters of Christianity move from Jerusalem to Rome? Where was that authorized?

You read in the Bible they had their councils in Jerusalem. You remember reading that in Acts chapter 15 and in other places? But what happened is the Emperor Justinian - well, first of all, Constantine legalized Christianity - let me just back up there - and the priests - people came running to the priests and said, 'We have idols and images everywhere. What do we do with them? And they said, 'Well, you'd better give them Christian names' because the Greeks and the Romans had hundreds of gods. And even Paul talks about this. He said, 'You've got so many gods, you've made a statue to an unknown god. And they said, 'What do we call our gods? We've got these gods of Venus and Jupiter and Appolo and Mars and they said, 'Well, call them Mary, Peter, James, and John. Even though the Bible says do not pray to statues, all of a sudden, almost overnight, Christians began to engage in idolatry because it was so pervasive in the Greco-Roman empire.

And a lot of habits that you find nowhere in the Bible, that really found their roots in paganism - we studied about hell - Greek mythology - Pluto being in charge of Hell. That came during this time. A lot of false teachings came in with the great pagan influx into the Christian church that was based in Rome. Then when Justinian, the Roman emperor, said, 'I'm moving the capital to Constantinople,' he told the bishop of Rome - and this is in 528 or 538 - sorry - he said, 'I'm giving you an army. You're in charge.' And that suddenly turned the church into not only a religious power, but a religious political power. In the history from the University of Rome it says, "To the succession of the Caesar's came the succession of the pontiffs in Rome. When Constantine left Rome he gave his seat to the pontiff." And so there was a transfer of authority. Didn't we just read that it says in the Bible, 'he will give him his seat? - The dragon gave him his seat, power, and great authority?' That's that dragon power of Rome that killed Jesus - that drove the nails in His hands. "The beast receives his power, seat, and authority from Rome." Exactly as we said it would happen.

Question #7: How far-reaching is the influence of the beast? Well, it says he causes all - Revelation 13:3 - he makes all the world to worship "And all the world wondered after the beast." It is a universal power. It tells us in Revelation 13:7, "And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation." It's a global power. Do you know what the word 'Catholic' means? It means 'universal.' Does anyone here not know that the Roman Catholic church is a universal - not a church only, but a power? Would the leader of the Baptist church be able to have the United Nations assemble for him to address them? Or the leader of the Methodist church? Even the Greek Orthodox church cannot have the United Nations assemble. But are you aware that the Vatican is not only a religion, the Vatican is the smallest country in the world? It has ambassadors. It has its own money. It has its own railroad - it's very small. Has its own postal system. Its own guard - Swiss Guard. It is an independent country. Do you know the Vatican is the most - foot-by-foot - it's the most populated country in the world. Just a hundred and three acres - whatever it is - they've got about 1,000 people there. But it's an independent country and it's a church.

Question #8: What comes out of the mouth of the beast? Now - this is where it gets a little serious, friends, but we've got to be honest. Revelation 13, verse 6, it says, "He opens his mouth in" - what's that word? - Blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name." Now, you can also read about the beast power in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 4. It says, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Blasphemy means when a person puts themself in the position of God. Now just in case you don't believe my definition, this is the biblical definition. If you look in John 10:33, it says that the Jews were preparing to stone Jesus. And they said - they answered and said, "For a good work we do not stone you, but for" - what? - "For blasphemy, and because you, being a man, make yourself God."

Alright, biblical definition of blasphemy is when a man puts himself in the position of God. The Jews knew that you're not supposed to receive worship. It's in the Bible. Some of you remember when king Herod - Acts chapter 12 - he let the people worship him and said it's the voice of a God and he should have said, 'Don't do that.' And an angel of the Lord struck him and he died. You remember, if you read your Bible, when the people of, I think it was Philippi, tried to worship Paul and Silas and make offerings

to them. Paul and Silas tore their clothes and said, 'Don't do that. That's blasphemy. We're just men.' People should not be worshiped as gods. That makes another god. That's why Daniel would not pray to Darius. But does the Catholic church put itself in the position of making a man more than just a man? This is a quote from Pope Leo the XIII, "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty." That's actually a painting of him as well. I've got a few other quotes here and I've got to pace myself so that we don't run out of time. Here's another one, "The pope can modify divine law, since his power is not of man, but of God. He is, likewise, the divine" - this is from the Catholic church - their own official writings and conferences - "He is, likewise, the divine monarch and the supreme emperor and king of kings. The Pope is, as it were, God on earth, sole sovereign of the faithful of Christ, chief king of kings, having a plentitude of power, to whom has been entrusted by the omnipotent God, direction, not only of earthly, but also the heavenly kingdom."

I've got a whole list of - and these are from - that was Pope Leo the XIII encyclical letter - "Hence the Pope is crowned with a triple crown as the king of Heaven, king of Earth, and of the lower regions. We define the apostolic holy see, the Vatican, and the Roman pontiff to hold primacy over the whole world." That's from the decree of the Council of Trent. And these things, you can all find them, easy enough, online. Some of them are in your lesson, but they do officially claim that the Pope is not a mere man, but he holds the position of God. That's one of his titles.

Another definition for blasphemy: "And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, 'Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" So, for a man to claim the ability to forgive sins, is blasphemy. Did Jesus say He could forgive sin? He did. What right did he have to do that? He is the Son of God. Now he told the woman - maybe it was Mary Magdalene - 'Go and sin no more.' He was going to forgive her. He told the man let down through the roof, 'Your sins are forgiven.' They said, 'That's blasphemy!' And they were right - if he wasn't the Son of God. But when a man says 'I have the authority to decide whose sins I'm going to forgive, that's defined as blasphemy. Now, here's from the book on dignities and duties of the priest, volume 12, "God Himself is obliged to abide by the judgment of His priests, and either not to pardon or to pardon, according as they refuse or give absolution. The sentence of the priests proceeds and God subscribes to it." It's saying, 'The man - the church - decides who is forgiven.' Where in the Bible does it say you have to confess your sins to a priest in order to be forgiven? The Bible says you confess your sins to God. You confess your faults to one another.

Question #9: How long would this first beast power - talking about Revelation 13:1 - the first beast now - how long would be its primary rule? It gives us a time period. The time period is given three times in Revelation so you don't miss it. "And power was given unto him to continue" - how long? - "Forty and two months." Forty-two months. The Jewish year had 360 days - lunar calendar - forty-two months was three and a half years - 1,260 days - same time period that there was a famine in the days of Elijah. Same time period that Jesus preached and was persecuted. It represents a time of persecution. Elijah fled for his life during three and a half years. Jesus was dogged and persecuted three and a half years and there are 1,260 prophetic years where the true church kind of has to go underground because a political religious institution - the iron mixed with clay - is in power during that time. "The legally recognized supremacy of the pope began in " - this is a very well established date in history - "when there went into effect a decree of Emperor Justinian, making the bishop of Rome head over all the churches, the definer of doctrine and the corrector of heretics." And he was given an army to force people to believe.

Now, did Jesus use an army to get believers? So it started to kill people that didn't believe what the church taught. The Christian church was never told to do that. And then you can read "Vigilius... ascended the papal chair (538 A.D.) Under the military protection of Belisarius." That's 'History of the Christian Church' vol. 3 P. 327.

What happened to the beast after the forty-two months? You can read in Revelation chapter 13, verse 3,

"I saw one of his heads as it was wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Well, if you start with forty-two months - a day in Bible prophecy is how long? 'I have appointed you a day for a year.' Forty-two months has 1,260 days, but that really means 1,260 years. If you start in 538 and you go 1,260 years, that comes to 1798. And so what happened in 1798? Do you realize that from 538 until 1798 the Roman church had virtually uninterrupted power over Europe? You had the Holy Roman Empire - any of you ever play chess? On the right of the queen and the King, what are the pieces? Bishops. There's one king, one queen, two bishops - because that modeled what was going on throughout Europe during that time. All the monarchs really had ambassadors from the church they had to answer to. And the Pope said, 'You've got to follow what I'm saying. You've got to pay the taxes and the offerings that I'm saying.' If they didn't, the pope would declare the whole country would be excommunicated. They could not get to Heaven without the priests. And so they really held everyone in terror. They could be consigned to Purgatory or Hell. And so even the kings cowered in fear. But "in 1798" - following the wars of Napoleon, Napoleon sent his general, Berthier, "...made his entrance into Rome, abolished the papal government and established a secular one." At that time, the Roman church received a deadly wound. They lost their sway over Europe. And they remained out of power.

You can read in Revelation 13 - we just read it - "He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." And many of the church leaders were slain during that time. The Pope, himself, was carried off into captivity in Valence, where he died. Now it stayed that way. It looked like the church had lost its sway over Europe but the deadly wound was healed. Here's actually a copy of the newspaper from 1929. This is the San Francisco Chronicle when the Pope was once again reinstated as an independent country it says, "The Roman question tonight was a thing of the past and the Vatican was at peace with Italy...in affixing autographs to the memorable document healing the wound." Isn't that interesting language? Didn't we find that - the deadly wound was healed? Healing the wound that had gone on since 1798. There was great cordiality displayed by both parties." This established - and Mussolini was instrumental in that - you've heard of him. This established the Vatican, once again, as an independent country that had ambassadors going, not now just to the leaders of Europe, but to the whole world.

Do you know that even in North America the U.S. has an ambassador to the Vatican? What does that mean? That's a lot of power. You know, it tells us his deadly wound would be healed and all the world wondered. Matter of fact, Pope Francis, in particular, is a very unique man. He's the first Jesuit pope and - to have one pope resign - Pope Benedict the XVI - and then to have another pope, who comes from obscurity from another country - from another continent who has gone to such international prominence - he's in the headlines every single week - and it's usually some kind of earth-shaking news.

The papacy has definitely gained worldwide influence, prestige, and prominence. He seems like a lovely man. I'm not talking about the person. He just seems so kind and approachable and down to earth, but what we're dealing with is the teachings - the official teachings have not changed. You know the church, they basically claim infallibility. I can show you that in black and white. They claim to have the ability to forgive sins.

Question #11: Is the beast a government or a religious power? Now the earlier beasts that we read about in Daniel and Revelation, they're mostly governments. But it says this one, there's something religious about it. Revelation 13:15, "And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." So there's worship involved there. It's religious. Are we all agreed? You're awful quiet. It makes me nervous.

Question #12: What does the beast do to the saints? It tells us, in addition, it is a persecuting power. Revelation 13, verse 7, and it says, "It was given unto him to make" - what? - "War with the saints, and to overcome them." Now the Roman Catholic church freely admits that they were involved in persecution.

Pope John Paul II was brave enough to actually ask, in behalf of the church, for forgiveness for the many millions who were killed by the church. And I've been around Europe. You can go and see the torture chambers - matter of fact, in the churches, they'll take you on tours and they'll show you the places where the Inquisition was enacted and people were imprisoned for not believing. If they were heretics they could be killed. They could be burnt at the stake. Literally millions of Christians and Jews or anyone who was classified as a heretic, was killed by the church. They were definitely in the category of a persecuting power. They admitted - matter of fact, one British historian, Edward Leckey, writes this: "That the Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind, will be questioned by no Protestant who has a competent knowledge of history. That's 'History of the Rise of the Spirit of Rationalization in Europe.'

Question #13: What is the mysterious number that identifies the beast? This is where it gets very interesting. Now we're getting to the end of Revelation 13:18. It says, "His number is" - what? - "Six hundred three score and six." I was getting change at the store one time and my change came back \$6.66 and I said, 'Oooh, look at that, 666.' And she said, 'Ooh, yeah.' I said, 'Do you know what that means?' And she said, 'No, but it's bad.' That's all she knew. People know the number - 'Ooh!' Now, if you happen to be at an auditorium and you've got, you know, the seats and the seats are numbered and it says you've got seat 665 and you've got seat 666, it doesn't mean anything. I'll give you some amazing facts tonight on the number 666 that you'll find very interesting.

But stay with me. The official title for the pope - it says it's the number of a man - it means a figurehead, not any one particular pope, but it's a position - it's an office. This is from Pope John Paul's book called 'Crossing the Threshold of Hope' - "Confronted with the Pope, one must make a choice. The leader of the Catholic church is defined by the faith as the Vicar of Jesus Christ." And that title, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in Latin, is 'Vicarius Filii Dei' - that's the position that he - that's his official title - "(and is accepted as such by believers). The pope is considered the man who, on earth, represents the Son of God, who 'takes the place' of the second person of the omnipotent God of the Trinity." That kind of frightens me for any man to say 'I take the place of Jesus on Earth.' That's their teaching.

Now, here's a quote from a document that actually has mysteriously gone missing. What are the letters on the Pope's crown, and what do they signify? And it says - and this was from April 18, 1915, "The letters on the Pope's crown are these: Vicarius Filii Dei: which is Latin for 'Vicar of the Son of God.'" Now, there's a lot of websites that you can go to that have official documents - the Vatican has their own library - Pope Paul - not John Paul II - I think it was Pope Paul the XXIII - the one who was in the last century. He, several times, used that title Vicarius Filii Dei in his documents. When you take that Latin title and you convert it to using Roman numerals to their number equivalent, you know, in English, our letters don't have numerical value, but the Roman letter V represents what? Five. How many of you remember your Roman numerals? I is? One. X is? Ten. Ten? C? One hundred. A hundred, like century, right? M is millennium or a thousand. So you take the Roman numerals, you take the title of the pope, Vicarius Filii Dei, and you add that up, what does it come to? 666. It's the number of a man. His own title. Throughout Revelation, that number - 7 represents perfection or completeness. The number 6 represents imperfection. It's the basis for the Babylonian system of calculation. A triple 6 therefore symbolizes the triple union of error, the union of the dragon, beast, and the false prophet.

Question #14: Who will sing God's praises in Heaven? And you can read in Revelation 15, verse 2, it says, "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

You know, friends, I just need to summarize this and I may not be able to say everything I'd like to say. I'm going to pray as I share this with you. The Bible is what we need to go by, amen? The Bible says that we're not to bow down to statues, right? The Catholic church says that we can bow down - and should -

to statues. The Bible teaches all have sinned except Jesus, right? The Roman Catholic church says Mary was sinless. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man - 1 Timothy 2:5. The Roman church says Mary is a co-mediator. The Bible teaches that Christ offered his sacrifice on the cross once for all. The Catholic church teaches the priest sacrifices Christ on the altar at every mass. The Bible teaches that all Christians are saints and priests.

Catholic church teaches that saints and priests are a special class within the Christian community. The Bible teaches that all Christians should know that they have eternal life. The Catholic church teaches that Christians cannot and should not know that they have eternal life. The Bible teaches that we should call no religious leader 'Father' - Matthew 23:9. You know, Jesus said 'Call no man father, you have one Father which is in Heaven.' Of course, the Catholic church tells us to call priests and the Pope 'Father.' The Bible teaches us not to pray in vain repetition - that's the words of Jesus. The Catholic church says to say 'Our Father,' 'Hail Mary,' over and over again as though God is reached by repetitive prayers. The Bible teaches to confess your sins to God only. The Catholic church says you must confess your sins to the priests for forgiveness.

The Bible teaches, before baptism, a person should be taught the Gospel and the commandments of God. 'Believe and repent.' But in the Catholic church they teach that infants must be baptized before they know that. The teaching of Purgatory, limbo, prayers for the dead, are nowhere in Scriptures, but they're relics of paganism that found their way into Christianity and before Jesus comes He is calling His people out of Babylon. There are good, loving, spirit-filled people in many different churches who have been confused by unbiblical teachings and God is wanting people to return to biblical truth. Now, I know some of the things I've shared - are we still friends? Yes. I'm, again, I love people in all different churches.

But I think our loyalty must be to the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. And if you would like to say, 'Lord, some of these things are difficult, but I want to follow Christ in His Word - that is the only rock that will survive the coming storm is the Word of God. If that's your desire, would you lift your hands before Him? I'd like to invite Christian to come out and he's going to sing, as we go off the air, and we'll all be praying together that God'll open our eyes and help us to see what He has prepared for us - to help us to see and to recognize the truth. Is that your desire? Amen.

Open my eyes that I may see

Glimpses of truth thou hast for me.

Place in my hands the wonderful key

That shall unclasp and set me free.

Silently now I wait for thee,

Ready my God thy will to see.

Open my eyes illumine me

Spirit divine.

Amen.