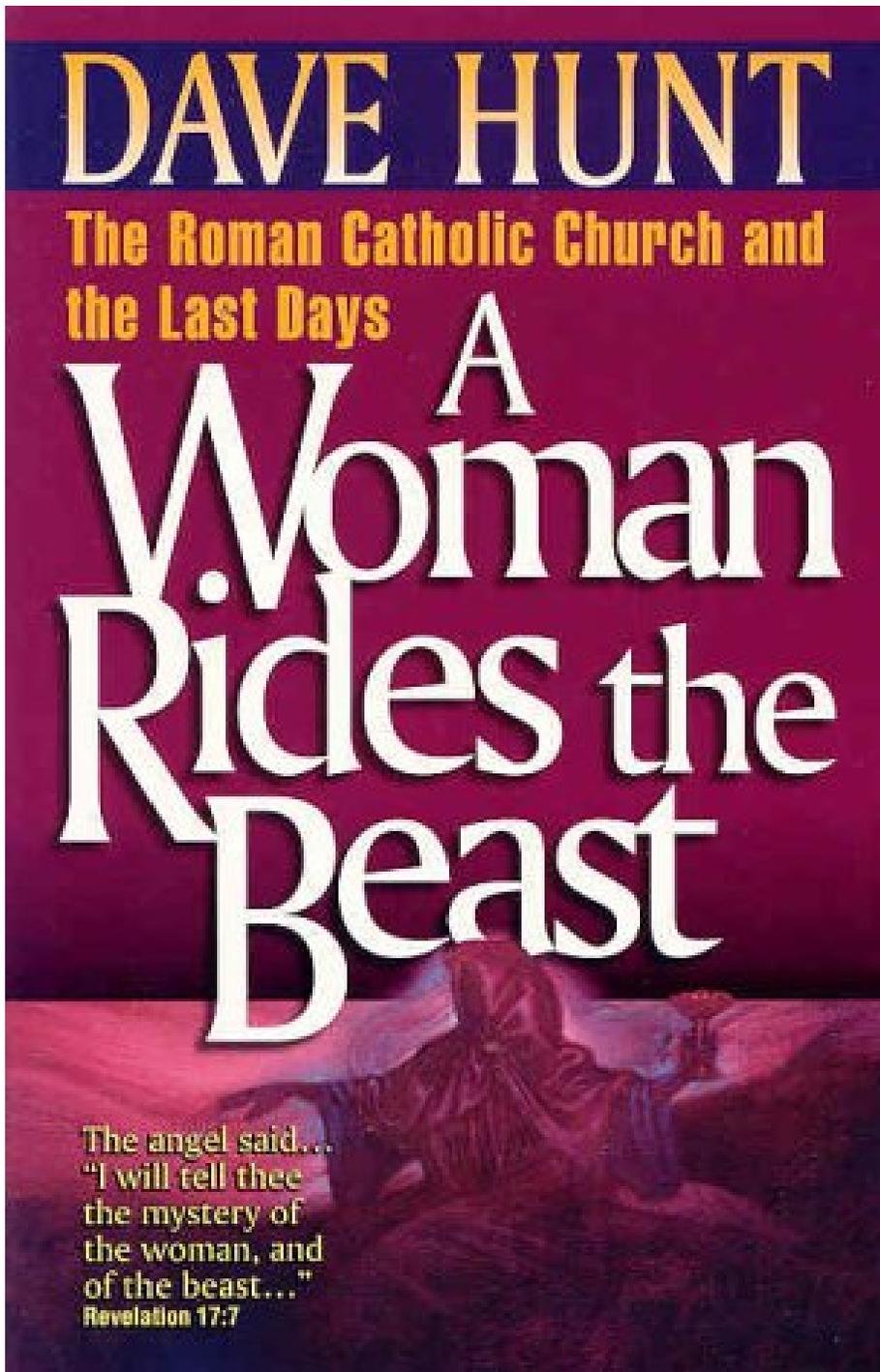


DAVE HUNT

**The Roman Catholic Church and
the Last Days**

**A
Woman
Rides the
Beast**

The angel said...
"I will tell thee
the mystery of
the woman, and
of the beast..."
Revelation 17:7



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*To the nearly 1 billion Roman Catholics
misinformed by their hierarchy;
to the 400 million Protestants equally ignorant
of the facts; and to the genuine martyrs
on both sides, this book is dedicated.*

Overturning the Reformation

The most significant event in nearly 500 years of church history was revealed as a *fait accompli* on March 29, 1994. On that day leading American evangelicals and Catholics signed a joint declaration titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the 3rd Millennium." The document, in effect, overturned the Reformation and will unquestionably have far-reaching repercussions throughout the Christian world for years to come.

This startling development was the culmination of careful planning and negotiations over the previous two years. Each step was continuously monitored and approved by the Vatican. The *New York Times* release making the announcement, which was carried in newspapers across the country on March 30, said in part:

They toiled together in the movements against abortion and pornography, and now leading Catholics and evangelicals are asking their flocks for a remarkable leap of faith: to finally accept each other as Christians. In what's being called a historic declaration, evangelicals including Pat Robertson and Charles Colson [one of the chief originators] joined with conservative Roman Catholic leaders today in upholding the ties of faith that bind the nation's largest and most politically active religious groups. They urged Catholics and evangelicals ... to stop aggressive proselytization of each other's flocks.

John White, president of Geneva College and former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, said the statement represents a "triumphalistic moment" in American religious life after centuries of distrust....

Other evangelical endorsers include the heads of the Home Mission Board and Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention [who acted in an independent capacity], the nation's largest Protestant denomination, and Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ.... Mark Noll of Wheaton University ... [Os Guinness, Jesse Miranda (Assemblies of God), Richard Mouw (President, Fuller Theological Seminary), J.I. Packer and Herbert Schlossberg].

Robert Simonds, Southern California chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals, "applauded the declaration" and said he hoped it would bring "increased cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics...." Other evangelical leaders have since signed the declaration, while still others have denounced it as a betrayal of the Reformation. Ironically, this bold move to "unite Catholics and evangelicals" will divide evangelicals as nothing else could-and as its endorsers must have realized.

The 25-page document acknowledges, without compromise, some key differences between Catholics and evangelicals (such as the significance of baptism and the authority of Scripture).

Unfortunately, the most important difference-*what it means to be a Christian*-is not mentioned. In fact, that such a difference even exists is denied. This compromise of the gospel lies at the heart of the agreement.

The key element behind this historic joint declaration is the previously unthinkable admission on the part of leading evangelicals that active participation in the Catholic Church makes one a Christian. If that is indeed the case, then the Reformation was a tragic mistake. The millions who were martyred (during a thousand years before the Reformation and since then to the present time) for rejecting Catholicism as a false gospel have all died in vain. If, however, the Reformers were right, then this new agreement between Catholics and evangelicals could well be the cleverest and deadliest blow struck against the gospel in the entire history of the church. Either way, the consequences are staggering. In praising the joint declaration, one leading evangelical declared:

[This document] has the potential to recast all the ecumenical discussions that have gone on through the years.... This is a new day. Our closest friends, as evangelicals, in the cultural task and in the fundamental theological task, are Roman Catholics.¹

The theological differences between Catholics and Protestants were once considered to be so great that millions died as martyrs rather than compromise them, and their Catholic executioners were equally convinced of the importance of such differences. How have these differences been dissolved? What has happened to cause leading evangelicals to declare that Catholicism's gospel, which the Reformers denounced as heretical, is now biblical? That gospel hasn't changed. Has conviction been compromised to create a huge coalition among conservatives for social and political action?

Evangelicals would decry the complacent attitude that everyone actively involved in a Protestant church is a Christian. How then did evangelical leaders consent to the view that all active Catholics are Christians and not to be evangelized? The document explains that both Catholics and evangelicals endorse the Apostles' Creed: that Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." That creed, however, like the Nicean and other creeds, does *not* express the gospel that saves (Romans 1:16): that "Christ died *for our sins* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Mormons affirm the Apostles' Creed, but they aren't biblical Christians. Nor does embracing the Creed make Catholics (or Protestants) Christians. Furthermore, what Catholics mean by Christ dying for their sins is entirely different from an evangelical understanding of this truth, as we shall see in later pages.

Whereas Roman Catholicism was once the official state religion and the practice of all others was prohibited throughout Latin America and most of Europe, that is no longer the case. Therefore Rome uses other strategies. In some countries, such as France, the Catholic Church is pressuring the government to make it illegal to "proselytize"-exactly what the endorsers of this joint pact have agreed upon. In other places the Catholic Church is demanding that evangelicals sign an agreement similar to the one just signed here in the United States. A recent news report declared:

Stunned by the staggering growth of evangelical "sects" in Brazil, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church have threatened to launch a "holy war" against Protestants unless they stop leading people from the Catholic fold.... At the 31st

National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil ... Bishop Sinesio Bohn [called] evangelicals a serious threat to the Vatican's influence in his country.

"We will declare a holy war; don't doubt it," he announced. "The Catholic Church has a ponderous structure, but when we move, we'll smash anyone beneath us." ... According to Bohn, an all-out holy war can't be avoided unless the 13 largest Protestant churches and denominations sign a treaty ... [that] would require Protestants to stop all evangelism efforts in Brazil. In exchange, he said, Catholics would agree to stop all persecution directed toward Protestants.²

The bishop admits that persecution of Protestants is still official policy. The extent of that persecution throughout history (which we will document) would greatly surprise both Catholics and Protestants. It is important to note that the concern at the bishops' conference was not the truth of the gospel or the salvation of souls, but *maintaining the influence of the Vatican and keeping people in the Catholic Church*.

Note too that the very treaty which Bishop Bohn demands under threat in Brazil has been granted in the United States by Colson, Packer, Bright, Robertson, et al! That Bohn's threats influenced American evangelical leaders is evident from Colson's statement in an interview that he and the other signatories to the document had become "distressed by the clashes arising from the growth of evangelical Protestantism in traditionally Catholic Latin America...."³

While evangelicals sign a truce, Rome is stepping up its evangelization of Protestants into the Catholic Church. Rome's "Evangelization 2000" has six evangelism training conferences scheduled just for 1994 across America involving such groups as "Paulist Evangelization Training Institutes" (in Washington D.C. during June 26-30 and July 24-28) and "The Association of Coordinators of Catholic Schools of Evangelization" (during August 3-6, also in Washington). These are serious training sessions for leaders in what they specify as "Catholic evangelism." Charles Colson was a featured speaker at the "John Paul II and the New Evangelization: Implementing the Vision" conference in Ypsilanti, Michigan, held during May 11-14. He shared the podium with Catholic leaders such as Fr. Tom Forrest, who heads "Evangelization 2000" out of the Vatican.⁴

The evangelical leaders who signed the joint declaration apparently imagined a spiritual partnership with Catholics to win the world to Christ. "Evangelism" for evangelicals means leading people to Christ. For Catholics, however, it means bringing people *into the Roman Catholic Church*-something which the joint agreement neglected to state. Consider the following explanation of "Catholic evangelism" by Fr. Tom Forrest to a group of Catholic charismatics:

Our job is to make people as richly and as fully Christian as we can make them by bringing them *into the Catholic Church*. So evangelization is never fully successful, it's only partial, until the convert is made a member of Christ's body by being led into the [Catholic] Church.

Now listen again to the words of [Pope] Paul VI. Now this is a document every one of you should have in your homes ... called "On Evangelization in the Modern World." This is what the Pope says: "The commitment of someone newly evangelized cannot remain abstract ('Oh, I'm a Christian,' now that's too abstract) ... it must be given concrete and visible form through entry ... into the [Catholic] Church our visible sacrament of salvation."

I like saying those words; I'm going to say them again: "Our visible sacrament of salvation!" That's what the Church is, and if that is what the Church is, we have to be evangelizing into the Church! ...

No, you don't just invite someone to become a Christian, you invite them *to become Catholics* ... Why would this be so important? First of all, there are seven sacraments, and the Catholic Church has all seven.... On our altars we have the body of Christ; we drink the blood of Christ. Jesus is alive on our altars, as offering.... We become one with Christ in the Eucharist....

As Catholics we have Mary, and that Mom of ours, Queen of Paradise, is praying for us till she sees us in glory.

As Catholics we have the papacy, a history of popes from Peter to John Paul II ... we have the rock upon which Christ did build His Church.

As Catholics-now I love this one-we have purgatory. Thank God! I'm one of those people who would never get to the Beatific Vision without it. It's the only way to go....

So as Catholics ... our job is to use this remaining decade evangelizing everyone we can *into the Catholic Church*, into the body of Christ and into the third millennium of Catholic history.⁵

Yet in spite of such clear explanations of Roman Catholic "evangelism," evangelicals are participating with Catholics in joint evangelistic efforts. For the Catholic, salvation does not come through personally receiving Christ as Savior but is a lengthy process that begins with baptism and thereafter depends upon one's continued relationship to the Church. Salvation comes through participation in the sacraments, penance, good works, suffering for one's sins and the sins of others here and/or in purgatory, indulgences to reduce time in purgatory, and almost endless masses and Rosaries said on one's behalf even after one's death. Catholic "evangelism" is by works, the very antithesis of "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Nevertheless, many Catholics, when they hear the true biblical gospel of God's grace, are receiving Christ as personal Savior. Such Catholic Christians eventually struggle with the conflict between Roman Catholicism and what they now realize the Bible teaches—a conflict so marked that the vast majority find it impossible to remain in the Catholic Church. Many Protestants are equally in doubt over the question of what their relationship to Catholics ought to be.

Confusion now surrounds the issues which were involved at the Reformation. The purpose of this book is to present vital, factual information which throws essential light upon the whole question of Catholic/Protestant relationships. The vast majority of both Catholics and Protestants are ignorant of the pertinent facts. It is our hope and prayer that the following pages will help to clarify the issues and dispel the confusion.

----- A WOMAN -----

He carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

-Revelation 17:3

----- RIDES THE BEAST -----

1

A Woman Rides the Beast!

The most astounding prophecies in the Bible are found in its last book, known as "The Revelation" or "The Apocalypse" and recorded by the apostle John about A.D. 95. He claimed to have received from the resurrected Christ Himself this series of visions of God's final judgment upon mankind which would close human history. This, the Bible's last and most awesome panoramic view into the future, embodies revelations of climactic events-some already fulfilled, most still future, but all both incredible and terrifying.

Of all the glimpses of "things which must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:1) which John reveals, none is as intriguing and staggering as the vision recorded by John in chapter 17. There we see a fearsome, scarlet-colored beast with seven heads and ten horns. This is not the first time it has appeared to biblical prophets. From the description, it is obviously the same terrifying creature whose description has already been recorded three times. John himself had seen it twice. Daniel saw it as well, 600 years earlier. But in this last glimpse, suddenly something has changed.

In its previous appearances in Scripture the beast has always been the total focus of attention, and invariably presented alone. Now, however, it appears with a rider on its back. That anyone would dare, much less be able, to mount such an incredible beast seems beyond imagination. Yet there she sits, quite at ease and obviously in control, astride a world-devouring creature defying description. *She? Yes, she. A woman rides the beast!*

For 1900 years the beast itself has been a major focus of attention for students of prophecy. Its identity, the frightening role it will play in the last days, and its ultimate end have been debated through the centuries. In the last 200 years, however, many evangelical Christians have held to a fairly clear consensus: The beast represents both the revived Roman Empire (Satan's worldwide counterfeit of God's kingdom), and the satanically empowered Antichrist who will rule it. Whether that interpretation is correct or not will become apparent in the following pages.

A Woman Who Can't Be Ignored

The woman is a far more enigmatic figure. The leaders of the Reformation were certain that she represented the Roman Catholic Church in general and the pope in particular. That belief, however, has been rejected lately by most Protestants as provocative and demeaning to a body of fellow Christians with whom evangelicals desire to work together in the task of winning most of the world for Christ before the year 2000. In fact, the subject of the woman is generally avoided today as too divisive to discuss.

Still, the woman, so vividly portrayed by John, cannot be dismissed so easily. There she is. Two of the final chapters in the Bible are devoted to her. What will we do with her? It would be dishonest to ignore such an important prophetic figure. The entire Bible is God's Word. We have no more right to close our eyes to Revelation 17 and 18 than to John 3:16.

Unquestionably, the woman is the central figure in these two important chapters, a major player in the drama of the last days. John gives far more attention to *her* than to the beast she rides. And the fact that she *rides the beast*-a beast of such importance that it literally holds the central position in Bible prophecy-demands our special attention. It could not be clearer that the secret of this woman's identity and the role she will play is a major key to understanding biblical prophecies concerning the reign of Antichrist and events leading up to Christ's second coming.

The Most Stunning Prophecy in Scripture

In the following pages we will show that the woman's identity is established meticulously and beyond any reasonable doubt by John himself. We will see that the vision of the woman is one of the most remarkable and significant prophecies in Scripture. The insights John was given by the Holy Spirit concerning this woman staggered him. These insights are no less breathtaking in our day.

Much of John's vision has already been fulfilled in history and can therefore be verified beyond question. Based upon the insights John provides, our identification of the woman will be determined carefully and unequivocally. Although many readers may denounce our conclusions, no one will be able to refute them.

The truth about the woman astride the beast is one of the most stunning prophecies in Scripture. We say specifically "in *Scripture*" because significant prophecies which have been on record for centuries and were later fulfilled are unique to the Bible. These are not cheap guesses by psychics but involve major world events of sweeping importance and irrefutable historic record.

The vision of the woman riding the beast, as we shall see, provides insights into occurrences which have shaped world history in the past and which will profoundly determine human destiny in the future. She sits, in fact, not only astride the beast but upon the culmination of centuries of related Bible prophecy.

A Question of Credibility

Are we simply sensationalizing John's vision? Why should anyone today be concerned with its interpretation? The question of validity can be settled quite easily. Most prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled. It is therefore a rather simple and straightforward matter to examine that record. For the sake of any doubters and to strengthen the faith of those who already believe, we must take a brief excursion into the amazing world of biblical prophecy. We will prove that past prophecies have been impeccably accurate, and that their fulfillment could not be explained by chance. That evidence will assure us that we are not wasting our time by examining prophecies concerning the future. And the woman on the beast does indeed have much to tell us about the future.

That goal accomplished, we will turn our attention to Revelation 17 and 18 and address the question of the identity and future role of the woman riding the beast, confident that the vision will be fulfilled exactly as John reveals it.

Much of the information we will present will not make pleasant reading. Disturbing, stretching the reader's credulity, denied by many, it will nevertheless be the fully documented truth. Moreover, it is a truth which every person on planet Earth, and especially all who consider themselves to be Christians-and most of all, Roman Catholics-need desperately to understand.

Our sympathy is particularly with sincere Roman Catholics who have such confidence in their Church that they have accepted what the hierarchy has told them without studying history to learn the full truth. It is our hope and prayer that the historic facts we present will be thoroughly checked against the record so that many devout followers of Rome will be able to face the evidence.

----- A WOMAN -----

*Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else ...
declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are
not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

-Isaiah 46:9,10

----- RIDES THE BEAST -----

Reason to Believe

Biblical prophecy is the key to understanding both the past and the future. While to skeptics that may seem a preposterous claim, it is easily proved. Because most prophecy recorded in Scripture has already been fulfilled, it is therefore a simple matter to determine whether or not the prophecies in the Bible are reliable.

Two major themes of prophecy run consistently throughout all of Scripture: 1) Israel; and 2) the Messiah who comes to Israel and through Israel to the world as the Savior of all mankind. Around these two central themes almost all other prophecies revolve and find their meaning, whether it be the rapture of the church, Antichrist, his coming world government and religion, the battle of Armageddon, Christ's second coming, or any other prophesied occurrence. The Bible is absolutely unique in presenting these prophecies, which it records in specific detail, beginning more than 3000 years ago.

About 30 percent of the Bible is devoted to prophecy. That fact validates the importance of what has become a neglected subject. In marked contrast, prophecy is completely absent from the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the Baghavat Gita, the Ramayana, the sayings of Buddha or Confucius, the Book of Mormon, or any other writings of the world's religions. This fact alone provides an undeniable stamp of divine approval upon the Judeo-Christian faith, which all other faiths lack. Biblical prophecy's unblemished record of fulfillment is sufficient to authenticate the Bible, in distinction to all other writings, as the one and only inerrant Word of God.

Prophecy-The Great Proof

There are many important reasons for Bible prophecy. First of all, prophecy fulfilled provides irrefutable proof for the existence of the very God who inspired the prophets. By foretelling major events of world history centuries and even thousands of years before they happen, the God of the Bible proves that He is the only true God, the Creator of the universe and mankind, the Lord of history-and that the Bible is His infallible Word given to communicate His purposes and way of salvation to all who will believe. Here is a proof so simple that a child can understand it, yet so profound that the greatest genius cannot refute it.

Prophecy thus plays a vital role in revealing God's purpose for mankind. It also provides foolproof identification of God's true Messiah, or Christ, and unmasks Satan's impostor, the Antichrist, so that no one who heeds God's Word need be deceived by him.

Just as prophecy is unique to the Bible, so it is unique to Christ. No prophecies foretold the coming of Buddha, Muhammad, Zoroaster, Confucius, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, the currently popular Hindu gurus who have invaded the West, or any other religious leader, all of

whom lack the credentials which distinguish Jesus Christ. Yet there are more than 300 Old Testament prophecies which identify Israel's Messiah. Centuries before His coming, the Hebrew prophets set forth numerous and specific criteria which had to be met by the Messiah. The fulfillment of these prophecies in minute detail in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth demonstrates indisputably that He is the promised One, the true and only Savior.

Inasmuch as these two major themes of Bible prophecy, Israel and the Messiah, have been dealt with in some of my other books, principally in *How Close Are We?*, we will only summarize them briefly here. In Isaiah 43:10 the God of Israel declares that the Jews are His witnesses to the world that He is God. Such is the case in spite of the fact that 30 percent of today's Israelis claim to be atheists and most Jews worldwide would never think of telling the world that God exists. Yet they are the witnesses, both to themselves and to the world, of His existence because of the astonishing fulfillment in history of precisely what God said would happen to these special people.

The Chosen People-Their Land and Destiny

Though much that the prophets foretold concerning Israel is yet future, *nine* major prophecies involving specific and historically verifiable details have already been fulfilled precisely as foretold centuries beforehand. 1) God promised a land of clearly defined boundaries (Genesis 15:18-21) to Abraham (Genesis 12:1; 13:15; 15:7; etc.). He renewed that promise to Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5), to his grandson Jacob (Genesis 28:13), and to their descendants after them forever (Leviticus 25:46; Joshua 14:9; etc.). 2) It is a historical fact that God brought these "chosen people" (Exodus 7:7,8; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; etc.) into the "Promised Land," an amazing story of miracles in itself. 3) When the Jewish people entered the Promised Land, God warned them that if they practiced the idolatry and immorality of the land's previous inhabitants, whom He had destroyed for their evil (Deuteronomy 9:4), He would cast them out as well (Deuteronomy 28:63; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Chronicles 7:20; etc.). That this happened is, again, an indisputable fact of history.

So far the story is hardly remarkable. Other peoples have believed that a certain geographic area was their "Promised Land" and after entering it have later been driven out by enemies. The next six prophecies, however, and their fulfillment, are absolutely unique to the Jews. The occurrence of these events precisely as prophesied could not possibly have happened by chance. 4) God declared that His people would be scattered "among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deuteronomy 28:64; cf. 1 Kings 9:7; Nehemiah 1:8; Amos 9:9; Zechariah 7:14; etc.). And so it happened. "The wandering Jew" is found everywhere.

The precision with which prophecies fit the Jews alone becomes increasingly remarkable as fulfillment follows fulfillment, until the case for God's existence through His dealings with His chosen people is irrefutable. 5) God warned that wherever they wandered the Jews would be "an astonishment, a proverb, a byword ... a curse and a reproach" (Deuteronomy 28:37; 2 Chronicles 7:20; Jeremiah 29:18; 44:8; etc.). Amazingly, this has been true of the Jews all down through history, as even the present generation knows full well. The maligning, the slurs and jokes, the naked hatred known as anti-Semitism, not only among Muslims but even among those who call themselves Christians, is a unique and persistent fact of history peculiar to the Jewish people. Even today, in spite of the haunting memory of Hitler's holocaust which once shocked and shamed the world, and in defiance of logic and conscience, anti-Semitism is still alive and is once again increasing worldwide.

History of Persecution

Furthermore, the prophets declared that these scattered peoples would not only be slandered, denigrated, and discriminated against, but 6) they would be persecuted and killed as no other peoples on the face of the earth. History stands as eloquent witness to the fact that this is precisely what has happened to the Jews century after century wherever they were found. The historical record of no other ethnic or national group of people contains anything that even approaches the nightmare of terror, humiliation, and destruction which the Jews have endured down through history at the hands of the peoples among whom they have found themselves.

Shamefully, many who claimed to be Christians and thus followers of Christ, who was Himself a Jew, were in the forefront of Jewish persecution and slaughter. Having gained full citizenship in the pagan Roman Empire in A.D. 212 under the Edict of Caracalla, the Jews became second-class citizens and the object of increasing persecution after the emperor, Constantine, supposedly became a Christian. Thereafter, it was those who called themselves Christians who were far more cruel to the Jews than pagans had ever been.

The Roman Catholic popes were the first to develop anti-Semitism to a science. Hitler, who remained a Catholic to the end, would claim that he was only following the example of both Catholics and Lutherans in finishing what the Church had begun. Anti-Semitism was a part of his Catholicism from which Martin Luther was never freed. He advocated burning down Jews' homes and giving them the choice between conversion and having their tongues torn out.¹ When Rome's Jews were released from their ghetto by the Italian army in 1870, their freedom at last ended about 1500 years of unimaginable humiliation and degradation at the hands of those who claimed to be the vicars of Christ.

No pope hated Jews more than Paul IV (1555-59), whose cruelties defy the bounds of human reason. Catholic historian Peter de Rosa confesses that a whole "succession of popes reinforced the ancient prejudices against Jews, treating them as lepers unworthy of the protection of the law. Pius VII [1800-23] was followed by Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, Pius IX [1846-78]-all good pupils of Paul IV."² Historian Will Durant reminds us that Hitler had good precedent for his sanctions against the Jews:

The [Roman Catholic] Council of Vienne (1311) forbade all intercourse between Christians and Jews. The Council of Zamora (1313) ruled that they must be kept in strict subjection and servitude. The Council of Basel (1431-33) renewed canonical decrees forbidding Christians to associate with Jews ... and instructed secular authorities [as the church had herself long enforced in Rome and the papal states] to confine the Jews in separate quarters [ghettos], compel them to wear a distinguishing badge [it had previously been a yellow hat], and ensure their attendance at sermons aimed to convert them.³

Preservation and Rebirth

God declared that in spite of such persecution and the periodic wholesale slaughter of Jews, 7) He would not let His chosen people be destroyed, but would preserve them as an identifiable

ethnic, national group (Jeremiah 30:11; 31:35-37; etc.). The Jews had every reason to intermarry, to change their names and hide their identity by any possible means in order to escape persecution. Why preserve their bloodline when they had no land of their own, when most of them didn't take the Bible literally, and when racial identification imposed only the cruelest disadvantages?

To refrain from intermarrying made no sense. Absorption by those among whom they found themselves would have seemed inevitable, so that little trace of the Jews as a distinct people should have remained today. After all, these despised exiles have been scattered to every corner of the world for 2500 years since the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Could "tradition" be that strong without real faith in God?

Against all odds, the Jews remained an identifiable people after all those centuries. That fact is an astonishing phenomenon without parallel in history and absolutely unique to the Jews. For most of the Jews living in Europe, Church law made it impossible to intermarry without converting to Roman Catholicism. Here again the Roman Catholic Church played an infamous role. For centuries it was a capital offense under the popes for a Jew to marry a Christian, preventing intermarriage even for those who desired it.

The Bible declares that God determined to keep His chosen people separated to Himself (Exodus 33:16; Leviticus 20:26; etc.) because 8) He would bring them back into their land in the last days (Jeremiah 30:10; 31:8-12; Ezekiel 36:24,35-38; etc.) prior to the Messiah's second coming. That prophecy and promise, so long awaited, was fulfilled in the rebirth of Israel in her Promised Land. It happened at last in 1948, nearly 1900 years after the final Diaspora at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman armies of Titus. This restoration of a nation after 25 centuries is utterly astonishing, a phenomenon without parallel in the history of any other peoples and inexplicable by any natural means, much less by chance.

Even more remarkable, 9) God declared that in the last days before the Messiah's second coming, Jerusalem would become "a cup of trembling ... a burdensome stone for all people" (Zechariah 12:2,3). At the time Zechariah uttered this prophecy 2500 years ago, Jerusalem lay in ruins and was surrounded by wilderness. And so it remained century after century. Zechariah's prophecy seemed to be utter madness even after Israel's rebirth in 1948. Yet today, exactly as foretold, a world of nearly 6 billion people has its eyes upon Jerusalem, fearful that the next world war, if it breaks out, will be fought over that tiny city. What an incredible fulfillment of prophecy!

No Ordinary Explanation

Israel occupies about one-sixth of 1 percent of the land area which the Arabs possess. The Arabs have the oil, the wealth, and the worldwide influence which such seemingly inexhaustible resources command. Not only is Israel's postage-stamp piece of land scarcely discernible on a world map, but it lacks all the essentials to make it the center of worldwide concern. In defiance of all reason, however, it is the focus of world attention, precisely as prophesied.

Jerusalem is a small city of neither commercial importance nor strategic location. Yet the eyes of the world are upon it as upon no other city. Jerusalem is indeed a "burdensome stone" around the necks of all nations of the world, the most vexing and volatile problem the United Nations faces today. There is no ordinary explanation for this. What the Hebrew prophets declared thousands of years ago and what seemed utterly fantastic in their time is being fulfilled in our

day. This is only part of the evidence, as we shall see, that the prophesied "last days" are upon us and that our generation will likely see the remainder of Bible prophecy fulfilled.

The prophecies outlined above (to say nothing of scores of others) have been a matter of public record on the pages of Scripture and available for careful examination for centuries. That they have been fulfilled in specific detail cannot be the result of mere chance but is in fact more than sufficient proof for the existence of the God who inspired the Bible and of that Book's authenticity and inerrancy. In view of such clear and overwhelming evidence, one can only charitably assume that no agnostic or atheist has bothered to read the biblical prophecies and check them personally against history and current events.

There are additional prophecies concerning Israel and Jerusalem which pertain to the last days and still await future fulfillment. We may be certain, on the basis of the prophecies which have already come true, that these too will surely be realized, and in the not-too-distant future. The most appalling time of utter destruction both for Jews and for the entire population of the world lies yet ahead. It is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7).

With astonishing accuracy, the Bible does not single out Damascus, Cairo, London, or Paris as the center of action in the last days, but two other specific cities: Jerusalem and Rome. They are diverse, have been enemies since the days of the Caesars, and remarkably are still rivals today for spiritual supremacy. Catholic Rome claims to be the "Eternal City" and the "Holy City," titles which the Bible has given to Jerusalem. Rome also claims to be the "New Jerusalem," putting her in direct conflict with God's promises concerning the true City of David.

There have been 2000 years of tension and antagonism between Rome and Jerusalem. For nearly 46 years after Israel's rebirth in 1948 the Vatican refused to acknowledge her right to exist. That animosity has not been erased by the recent overtures which the Vatican has found it expedient to make toward Israel. Rome wants to influence the future of Jerusalem, which she still insists must be an international city over which Israel will have no more say than any other nation.

With awesome precision, the Bible identifies Jerusalem and Rome as the focal points of prophesied last-days events. Both will come in for their share of God's judgment. It requires little more than casual attention to the daily news to recognize the accuracy of that forecast. Here too, in what the Bible says about Rome and Vatican City, we have additional evidence that this book is God's Word-evidence that we will be examining in detail.

----- A WOMAN -----

Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth ... being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

-Peter in his first sermon
Acts 2:22,23

Paul... [for] three sabbath days reasoned with them [the Jews in their synagogue] out of the [Old Testament] Scriptures ... that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ [the Messiah].

-Paul in a typical sermon
Acts 17:2,3

----- RIDES THE BEAST -----

A Passover Plot?

The prophecies concerning the second major theme of the Bible, the coming of the Messiah, are even more numerous and detailed than those pertaining to Israel. These prophecies have also been dealt with at some length in my previous books, so we will only summarize a few of them briefly here. Even the most anti-Christian critics who deny categorically that Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of the world admit that many specific messianic prophecies were fulfilled in His life and crucifixion. In the attempt to explain away the significance of that fact some bizarre theories have been invented.

Typical of such attempts was a book and movie (neither very successful) some years back entitled *The Passover Plot*. Its thesis was that Jesus, knowing some of the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, conspired with Judas to fulfill them in order to make it appear that He was the promised Messiah.

Irreconcilable Contradiction?

Obviously it would have been ludicrous for Jesus to get Himself crucified in order to convince a small band of uneducated, inept followers that He was the Christ. In fact, neither His disciples nor any other Jew, including even John the Baptist, could believe (though the prophecies were clear, as Christ explained often) that the Messiah was to be crucified. His death rather seemed proof that he was *not* the Messiah, so fulfilling the prophecies concerning His crucifixion to the letter, as He did, would not have been the way to gather a following. In fact, Christ's death in fulfillment of Scripture was in order to pay the penalty for our sins.

The prophecies concerning His death (Psalm 22:16; Isaiah 53:5,8-10,12; Zechariah 12:10; etc.) were avoided by the Jews as impenetrable mysteries because they seemed totally at odds with other prophecies declaring plainly that the Messiah would ascend David's throne and rule over a magnificent kingdom. How could the Messiah establish a kingdom and a peace that would never end (Isaiah 9:7) and yet be rejected and crucified by His own people? It seemed impossible for both to be true, so the Jewish interpreters simply ignored what didn't seem to make sense to them.

That the Jews were able to crucify Jesus was the final triumphant proof to the rabbis, and it served as the disappointing but undeniable evidence to the Jewish masses and His most devoted disciples that Jesus of Nazareth couldn't possibly have been the Messiah. The prophesied messianic kingdom had not been established, nor had He brought peace to Israel by delivering

her from her enemies, so at best He could only have been a well-meaning impostor, and at worst a deliberate fraud. Such remains the argument of most Jews today.

There was, however, one way to reconcile the apparent contradiction: The Messiah had to come twice, the first time to die for man's sins, the second time to reign on the Davidic throne. But even when Jesus explained that fact ahead of time, no one could understand it. It would take His resurrection to open blind eyes.

Beyond a Mere Man

Yes, there were a few prophecies which Jesus of Nazareth could have conspired with Judas or others to fulfill. Most prophecies, however, were beyond the control of any mere man. For example, being born in Bethlehem and of the seed of David were major requirements for the Messiah. The timing of the Messiah's birth, too, as foretold was obviously beyond the influence of any ordinary mortal. His birth had to occur before the scepter departed from Judah (Genesis 49:10), while the temple was standing (Malachi 3:1), while the genealogical records were available to prove His lineage (2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 89; etc.), and shortly before the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed (Daniel 9:26).

There was a narrow window of time during which the Messiah had to come-and He did. As the apostle Paul, a former rabbi, so eloquently put it, "But when the *fullness of time* was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman [i.e. virgin born]. .." (Galatians 4:4). It is too late for the Messiah to make His *first* appearance now. There can only be a *second* coming, as the Bible declares. Yet the Jews still await the first appearing of the one whom they will imagine is their Messiah but who will in fact be the Antichrist.

The scepter departed from Judah about A.D. 7, when the rabbis lost the right to exact the death penalty. This right was crucial to the practice of their religion because death was the penalty for certain religious offenses. When Pilate told the rabbis he wanted nothing to do with Jesus and for them to judge Him themselves, they replied, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). The Messiah had to be born before that power was lost, and He had to be put to death afterward, for He was not to die by stoning, the Jews' manner of execution, but by *Roman crucifixion*. Amazingly, His crucifixion was prophesied centuries before that means of execution was even known: "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16).

Obviously, too, the Messiah had to be born while the genealogical records still existed, or there could be no proof that He was of the seed of David. Those records were lost with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, an event which both Daniel (in 9:26) and Christ prophesied (Matthew 24:2). Since then it has been too late for the Messiah to come, though the majority of Jews still await His first advent. Christians, on the other hand, expect the *second* coming, which also was foretold by the Hebrew prophets.

Amazing Fulfillments

Had Jesus conspired to fulfill the prophecies, He would have had to bribe Pilate to condemn the two thieves to be crucified with Him in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9. He also would have had to know what soldiers would be on duty that day in order to bribe them ahead of time to divide His clothes among them and gamble for His robe (Psalm 22:18), to give Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall (Psalm 69:21), and to pierce His side with a spear (Zechariah 12:10) instead of