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Rome, its Religion and Ten Emperors that Persecuted the Church.

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Rome, its Religion

And

Ten Emperors that Persecuted the Church.

Topics.

- The beginning of Rome and worship of Roman emperors and images.
 - Rome's religion and reason for Christian persecution.
 - Christians considered antisocial scum.
 - Nero and the fire of Rome, Trajan Decius, Valerian, Gallienus, and Diocletian.
 - Ten Roman persecutions, Rome and Christianity and Constantine 1.
 - Doctrinal errors of the Papal Church and Christianity takes on a new form.
 - Constantinople, Istanbul and Turkey and the fall of the Roman empire.
 - The holy Roman empire in the West and the East and Mystery Babylon.
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A PERSONAL NOTE

Though I have always loved reading and studying the Scriptures and have now walked with Christ and in God's grace for around fifty years the following studies should not be taken to be dogmatic, inflexible or the final word on the matter since I am fully aware that my mind is limited by mortality and that greater understanding of God's revelation is continually becoming clearer before our eyes as we move closer to the time of Christ's glorious return in glory.

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INTRODUCTION

This document looks at the how the Roman Papal church grew out of pagan Rome; why it is likened to Rome and to Babylon in character; why Roman emperors persecuted Christians; why its citizens considered Christians antisocial scum; why Christianity was corrupted during the reign of emperor Constantine 1, and why Christianity took on such a new form that true Christianity was difficult to find.

THE BEGINNING OF ROME

Rome started out as a small, hilly settlement by the Tiber River, in the middle of the Italian boot and surrounded by powerful neighbours. By the time Rome became an empire the territory covered by the term "Rome" looked completely different. It reached its greatest extent in the second century A.D.

FOUR HORSES

Revelation chapter four speaks of a rider on a white horse coming with weapons of war; a rider on a bright red horse that takes peace from earth; a rider on a black horse that brought famine and a rider on a pale horse whose name was death. (Rev. 6:2-8). Most commentators agree that these horses and their rider refers to the age of the Roman Empire, but there is a difference of opinion as to which specific period of Rome's rule

they apply to and which Roman Emperor the rider of the horses symbolise. During Rome's conquest of kingdoms their fierce and strong armies continually marched forward to conquer, destroy and expand the Roman Empire across the land. There were battles in which thousands were killed and Roman subjects who did not submit to Roman rule were treated miserably and with oppression and during the ten renowned Roman persecutions thousands of Jews were brutally mocked, cruelly beaten, imprisoned and killed as were multitudes of Christians. It is impossible in this document to present a complete account of Roman history and of its Caesars and Emperors.

To discover which Emperor each horse and rider refers to would not only involve a very vast study of Roman history, but also fill many pages in this study, so to keep things simple and brief this study will simply accept the reality that each horse and its rider represents a specific period of Roman history. However, these horses and their riders are not limited to the Roman era but can by extension prophetically be taken to symbolise future nations, kings and events to come upon the world in the latter days. It could be said that the partial fulfilment of these four horses during the era of Rome was a prelude to far more powerful kings and their weapons of war (i.e., weapons of mass destruction) and events that will not be limited to a partial area of earth but affect the entire globe.

ROMAN TRIBUNE

Roman tribune refers to an official in ancient Rome or a Roman legionary military officer, or popular leader and champion of peoples' rights, chosen by the commoners and those of the lower social classes to protect their interests.

ROME'S GOVERNMENT

Rome's government was made up of kings, consuls, dictators, and military tribunes. It was different from all other governments in the world, in that its authority was not limited to its own immediate subjects, or confined within the bounds of its own dominions, but extended over all kingdoms and countries.

WORSHIP OF ROMAN EMPERORS AND IMAGES

Deification and worship of Roman emperors came from the East. The Egyptian Pharaohs and the Ptolemies (the last of the Egyptian Pharaohs) and Lycurgus and Lysander of Sparta, and Alexander the Great were worshipped as divinities both while living and when dead. When Rome conquered the East, the same divine honours were transferred to the Roman proconsuls. This naturally led to a single ruler of the empire being acclaimed as a god when he appeared, in the eastern provinces, since the minds of the Romans had been prepared for imperial worship of rulers of kingdoms. The heroes of Roman legend, as Aeneas, Latinus, Romulus, whom the Romans accepted as historical personages and the founders of the nation were believed to be of divine descent and were themselves honoured as deities. It was natural therefore, that founders of Rome, would likewise be regarded as a god and be accorded the same homage.

ROME'S RELIGION

The persecution of Christians by the Roman Government was not a consistent policy that was enforced the same way by every Roman provincial governor or government official or even by different emperors. Most of the time, Christians were tolerated but were viewed as strange and somewhat antisocial by most of the Roman people. Rome glorified and exulted herself in the number of her victories and believed them to

be proof that her religion was the true religion. The objective of Roman worship was to gain the blessing of the gods and therefore each god needed an image which was often an image or more correctly a statue (usually made of stone or bronze) of the emperor himself who was, considered to be a god.

REASON FOR CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Although there were times when Christians were persecuted for their refusal to worship the Roman emperor, the primary reason for the general dislike for Christians arose from their refusal to worship the gods of Rome and take part in sacrifice to them. This was expected of all citizens living in the Roman Empire, because the Roman gods were actually a part of the state religion, and it was thought that they must be worshipped regularly in order for the Romans to have victory in war and prosperity at home, it was considered a Roman's patriotic duty to sacrifice regularly to Jupiter, Mars, Juno, Vesta, and leave offerings out for the household gods, the Lares and Penates. The Christians, on the other hand, believed in one God and worship Him only making sacrifice to Jupiter or Poseidon was abhorrent to a Christian. Because the Romans believed that the favour of the gods was necessary to the security of the state, the Christians were believed to be unpatriotic. In addition, many Christians refused to serve in the army because they might have to kill other human beings and thus violate the commandments of Christ. As a result, the Roman government saw fit to persecute the Christians from time to time, especially during periods when reform movements arose to return to the old Roman ways and values.

CHRISTIANS CONSIDERED ANTISOCIAL SCUM

Some Emperors could not understand why a Christian would choose a shameful, agonizing public death over being reinstated as a full citizen with all privileges when all the person needed to do was make a sacrifice for the health of the emperor or even just sprinkle a little incense over a lighted altar. The crowds who came to witness the games were a different matter altogether. Sometimes they became worked up into a frenzy of hate. They considered the Christians to be antisocial scum and clamoured for a painful death for them in the arena, being mauled and torn apart by wild beasts or forced to fight gladiators who killed them for a public spectacle.

NERO AND THE FIRE OF ROME

The most famous of the Christian persecutions was under Nero. A disastrous fire destroyed much of Rome in the year A. D. 64. Somehow, a rumour started circulating that Nero himself started the fire, so he could rebuild the city. It was well-known that he considered much of Rome ugly and squalid. Whether or not he had any part in starting the fire is still being debated to this day, but the rumours started to spread and could have become a threat to his reign and life if left unchecked. He therefore decided to blame the antisocial and subversive Christians for starting the fire. To make sure his accusations against the Christians were believed he had many of them killed. Some were crucified in the arena, others thrown to wild animals, and others were burned alive as living torches to give light to Nero's garden at his golden house, because of his most well-known persecutions, he was written into history as one of the most depraved and cruel of the Roman emperors. The apostle Peter died during the Neronian persecutions.

TRAJAN DECIUS, VALERIAN, GALLIENUS, AND DIOCLETIAN

Trajan Decius, Valerian, Gallienus, and Diocletian persecutions were renewed under Septimius Severus, Trajan Decius, Valerian, Gallienus, and Diocletian. The Second Century emperor Trajan instructed his provincial governors, not to actively seek out Christians, however those who publicly and openly proclaimed their faith were condemned to death. Severus Alexander and his mother, Julia Mamaea, were interested in all gods, philosophies, and religions, it is said that Severus Alexander kept a statue of Jesus amongst the statues of other gods in his own personal shrine. Persecutions were particularly acute under emperor Decius and Diocletian, since they desired to revive worship of the old Roman gods and bring back a respect for Rome's ancient religious customs.

TEN ROMAN PERSECUTIONS

Following are the ten Roman Emperors known for their fame and for their extreme persecution of Christians.

1. The first was under Nero. A.D. 64 or 66.
2. The second was under Domitian about A.D. 93.
3. The third was under Trojan. A.D. 104.
4. The fourth was under Hadrian. A.D. 125.
5. The fifth was under Marcus Antoninus. A.D. 151.
6. The sixth was under Septimius Severus A.D. 197.
7. The seventh was under Maximinus. in A.D. 235, 236, 237.
8. The eighth was under Decius in A.D. 250.
9. The ninth was under Valerianus. A.D. 257.
10. The tenth was under Dioclesian. A.D. 303.

This tenth and final persecution under Emperor Dioclesian lasted around ten years, it was the greatest persecution that the early church ever endured and though there were many other persecutions none of them lasted ten years. Since it is not uncommon in prophetic writings to put days for years, it would not be wrong to accept that the ten days the Smyrna church was about to suffer (Rev. 2:8-11) to be prophetically referring to the ten years of this last Roman persecution of Christians.

ROME AND CHRISTIANITY

When the Roman Empire started, there was no such religion as Christianity. In the 1st century Pontius Pilate the prefect of the Roman province of Judaea had Jesus the founder of the Christian faith crucified. It took Christians a few centuries to gain enough strength that they were, able to win over Roman support which began in the early 4th century with emperor Constantine 1. After an intense period of persecution under Diocletian, emperor Constantine gave Christians legal right to worship as they pleased under the Edict of Milan, issued in A. D. 313 by Constantine I. Seventy-five years later, Christianity had become so influential and Christians had such power that the emperor Gratian had the ancient statue of Victory removed from the Roman Senate House on the insistence of the very powerful and influential Archbishop Ambrose of Milan.

Constantine 1, was:

- Actively involved in Christian policy-making and stopped all forms of Christian persecution.

- Established religious tolerance in the Roman Empire and took on the title of Pontiff (meaning, Pope as leader of the Roman Catholic Church).
- Gave Christians privileges; oversaw major Christian religious disputes and was baptized on his deathbed.

Over time Christianity superseded the old Roman religions and gods and Christian church leaders, became increasingly influential, eroding the emperors' powers until AD 390 when Christianity became the official religion of Rome.

DOCTRINAL ERRORS OF THE ROMAN PAPAL CHURCH (V3)

Following is a list of false doctrines that the Roman Papal Church adopted during the reign of Constantine 1, the first self-appointed Pope:

- The Roman Catholic Church is the true church and the Mother church over all the earth and universal church over all nations and all churches.
- The worship of the Virgin Mary.
- During the Eucharist, the wine mystically turns to the literal blood of Christ and the bread to his flesh.
- Attending mass and strictly adhering to the church's holy days, ceremonial rites and keeping its religious practises and traditions saves a person and secures their salvation.
- The doctrine of celibacy and forbidding marriage to priests.
- Purgatory is a place or state of suffering where the souls of sinners go to atone for their sins before going to heaven.
- To receive forgiveness of sins followers must confess their sins to a human priest.

PRIESTS AND THE POWER TO PARDON SINS.

- Popes have authority to exalt the dead to sainthood.

Added to all of the above is the outward show of pompous, hypocritical and theatrical religion and the followers of its religion highly esteeming and exalting the Pope for his supposed infallibility and holiness and the splendour of the Vatican and its worldly riches, grandeur and pomp. This same self-exalting superior religious spirit the Popes manifest is the same spirit the great prostitute woman and the man of lawlessness (man of sin in KJV) (2 Thess. 2:1-4) (an antichrist and son of destruction) (1 John 2:22) will manifest in the latter days and the same adoration the Popes receive from their followers, is the same adoration the final false prophet and the man of lawlessness and sin will receive from their followers.

THE PAPAL CHURCH, LIKENED TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS, PHARISEES AND SCRIBES

The Papal Church of Rome could be likened to the religious rulers of Jesus Generation, the prideful and hypocritical chief priests, Pharisees and scribes believed they were doing the work of God but were so spiritually blinded that they enticed a secular Roman king (Pilate) to have his soldiers crucify their own Messiah the Son of God. Likewise, the Papal Church of Rome wrongly believes they are upholding the true word of God and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Shortly after the end of the persecution of Christians by the emperor Diocletian Constantine the first Christian Roman emperor. (also known as Saint Constantine) adopted the Christian faith as the state religion of Rome and issued the Edict of Milan signed by himself and emperor Licinius, which was a letter issued in A.D. 313, that proclaimed religious toleration in the Roman Empire. From this time onward religious toleration was permanently established for Christianity within the Roman Empire. Constantine adoption of the Christian faith as the state religion of Rome greatly advanced Christianity, but during this time the true Christian church gradually took on a new form.

To appeal to the masses and pagan religions it embraced false doctrine and superstition, and Christians became vain, proud and ambitious, seeking importance, power and worldly riches. Outwardly the church flourished and spread itself throughout the Roman empire, especially the Roman Papal Church, so much so that in process of time the church it took on a different form to what the apostles and Paul had taught that the true church, practically became invisible, like persons in wilderness not to be seen.

Overtime this paved the way for the creeds and doctrines of faith that Constantine and a council of bishops established with the aim of formalizing accepted doctrines and the establishment of ecumenical councils, where ecclesiastical dignitaries, priests, bishops and so called theological experts gathered together to discuss and establish church doctrine and once established, force it upon all others. These councils established their orthodox doctrines, which they adamantly believed to be the correct teaching of the Christian faith. From these doctrines The Roman state church was established, known by the name:

- The Catholic Church; the Orthodox Church and the Imperial Church.
- The Imperial Roman Church; the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Byzantine Church.
- The Oriental Orthodox Church and the various Eastern Catholic Churches

In a wider sense these titles, also embrace all religions and nations in league with the Roman Papal Empire. Despite the counsels of these Bishops priest and theologians of the Roman Papal Church establishing a universal set of doctrines for all Christian churches to embrace, Christianity continued to suffer rifts and schisms, this is because it is contrary to the Spirit of Christ to force what one believes upon another. During Jesus time on earth, the Roman Empire was steeped in pagan gods, Jesus did not force his Gospel upon Rome, but taught it and left each individual free to choose or reject it. When a believer attempts to force what they believe upon others, especially by violence, they are not being influenced by the Spirit of God which is love and grace, but by the spirit of deception, pride and very often selfish ambition.

CONSTANTINOPLE, ISTANBUL AND TURKEY

Constantine named the new capital for Rome that he built in Turkey (today called Istanbul) Constantinople after himself. According to the 2000 census of Turkey, there were 2,600 active mosques, 123 active churches and 20 active synagogues in Istanbul. Up to 98 percent of Turkeys population are Muslims, which obviously means that Christians are a minority religion. It is the only Muslim country in the world that has no state religion and therefore considered a secular country and as such the Constitution guarantees religious freedom and tolerance as the general rule.

The Roman Empire lasted over a thousand years and represented a sophisticated and adaptive civilization. The expression, "the Fall of Rome," suggests some cataclysmic event ended the Roman Empire which had stretched from the British Isles to Egypt and Iraq, but its end cannot be placed upon a single event, since its fall did not come suddenly, but rather fell slowly because of the following things:

- The Roman Empire became too big to control easily and it lost control over much of its military.
- The split into an Eastern and Western empire governed by separate emperors caused schisms and massive trade deficits.
- The incompetence of its Emperors and the failing strength of its economy.
- The many changes of religions and the lack of efficient civil administration.
- Increasing pressure from invading barbarians outside Roman culture.
- The slow diminishing of political and financial power such as inflation; over-taxation; widespread looting of the Roman treasury by invaders and a massive trade deficit with the eastern regions of the empire.
- Challenges from within and without over the course of hundreds of years.
- Some scholars have suggested that the Romans suffered heavy metal poisoning from the presence of lead in the drinking water leached from water pipes used in the vast Roman water system.

Together these issues combined to bring about the decline of the Roman Empire's glory, strength and power and eventually resulted in the complete fall and ruin of Rome. However, from her ashes rose the Papal Church which has now by far surpassed the power authority and influence (both secular and religious) worldwide that ancient Rome had. After Rome's decline and the fall of the seat of the empire, and the successive loss of its opulence and provinces, its magnificent edifices were exposed to ruin and decay and the land of the once glorious empire was practically reduced to a barren land so much so that the name of Rome might have been erased from the earth, if the city had not been revived by the influence of the Papacy of Rome.

It could be rightly stated that the Pontificate, resuscitated Rome as with a second birth and saved it from becoming a total waste. The Roman emperors held the title Pontiff, so it was only natural that the Popes of Rome would take to themselves the same title when their power superseded that of the emperors. Nations and people all over the world came to adore and worship the Popes of the Papal Church as the perpetual head and the successor, not of Caesar, but of the apostle Peter who is considered by the Catholic Church to be the Supreme Pontiff.

At the rise of Papal Rome, the magnitude of the new religious empire was not equal in power and influence to that of the old empire, but its character and nature was very similar, because all nations from East and West, venerate the Pope and today it has surpassed the influence, wealth and power of the ancient Roman empire. In the latter days its influence will extend over kings, princes, nations and a sea of people worldwide.

The Western Roman Empire consists of the western provinces of the Roman Empire administered by a separate independent Imperial court, to that of the Eastern Roman Empire. However, at no point did the Romans consider the Empire split into two, but rather considered it a single state governed by two separate Imperial courts out of administrative expediency. Likewise, the revived Papal Roman Church operates in the West and the East each having their own head, but both ministering under the umbrella and title of the Roman Catholic Church, and in this manner and in a very meaningful sense revived the old empire of Roman.

THE COLOUR SCARLET AND PURPLE

In the book of Revelation, the great prostitute woman full of abomination is pictured as being arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls. (Rev. 17:4), purple and scarlet (or crimson), very aptly denotes Papal Rome for the following reasons:

- Scarlet (or crimson), both being red was the colour of the cloaks that Roman emperors and military commanders wore and the colour of blood which Rome shed throughout nations.
- It was the colour of the robes, hats, cloaks and stockings the Pope, the cardinals, the bishops and the priests wore.
- On great festival occasions; the entire body of the carriage of the cardinals was scarlet as were the strappings on the horses.
- The inner colour of the Popes cloak is scarlet; his carriage is scarlet and the carpet on which he treads is scarlet.
- A large part of the dress of the body-guard of the Pope is scarlet; and no one can take up a picture of Rome without seeing that this colour is predominant.
- On occasions of public festivals and processions, scarlet cloth is suspended from the windows of the houses along which processions pass.
- Scarlet the colour of blood also symbolises the blood of the faithful and the martyrs the Papal Church of Rome shed.

It was Rome that crucified Christ; destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews; persecuted the early Christians in pagan times, and faithful Christians in Papal times; and will again take on the same character when it is restored to its pristine grandeur, that it had under the Caesars and aligned itself with the Roman Papal Church and has strong influence over the nations.

MYSTERY BABYLON

The prostitute woman full of abominations (Rev. 17:5), symbolizes Rome pagan and Rome Papal and yet she has written of her forehead the name: of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." (Rev. 17: 5), this carries the idea that the character of the Roman Empire and the Babylonian Empire is embraced in this woman. Following are some likely reasons for this:

- Babylon burned Jerusalem, pillaged the temple of God and took the people of God captive for seventy years and in A.D. 70 Rome burned Jerusalem and persecuted Christians.
- Both Babylon and Rome worshipped idols and pagan gods and killed God's people.
- The Babylonian empire at its peak covered most of the Eastern world while the Roman empire at its peak covered most of the Western world.

Like Rome and Babylon, the great woman with the name of: "mystery Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes' and of earth abominations," written on her forehead (Rev. 17:5) will in the latter days have the same vast power, influence and wealth and be of a similar character.

NOTE: though the central focus has been upon the Roman Papal Church since the Vatican is the only city in the world that visibly represents Christianity to the global world and that claims to be the Mother of all Churches worldwide, it should not be thought that the Vatican is the only Church that comes under the umbrella of the title: "The Great Prostitute Woman full of abominations," (Rev. 17:1-6) since the title embraces all churches and religious organisations and denominations whether Christian or otherwise that:

- Teach doctrines contrary to the message of the bloodstained cross of Calvary and the Gospel and that salvation is by self-effort, good works and by adhering to holy days, ceremonial rites and keeping religious customs and traditions.
- Confess to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, but, have no inward love toward him, and are therefore hypocrites that outwardly attend to religious duties, but live a lifestyle that dishonours God and brings shame to the name of Jesus,

It should also be highlighted here, that this does not mean that we can dogmatically state that everyone under the umbrella of the title, "The Great Prostitute Woman," will be judged and condemned, because none of us can judge the eternal salvation of an individual, since none of us can see the true motives of the heart, however we can discern the collective spirit of an organisation (secular or religious). Though the true church of believers is hidden and dispersed in and amongst the visible outward church, the division that separates the prostitute woman from the true invisible spiritual church is not denominational nor external but can only be spiritually discerned.

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It is almost certain that God will have people in the global religious empire symbolised by the great woman, that has the name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations written on her forehead" (Rev. 17:5), but a warning is given to all who expect mercy that they should separate themselves from this latter-day world religious empire. (Rev. 18:4-6). This entity fully described in the book of Revelation as, "a great woman with the name, "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations," written on her forehead, is pictured sitting on a scarlet coloured beast that is full of blasphemous names, with seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 17:1-6) will not appear to the world as a beast, but as a system of splendour and wonder that will seem to have the will, the authority and the power to bring peace to earth and save the planet.

This is because its underlying foundation will be driven by the spirit of humanism, meaning, the well-being of mankind and the planet, which are good things, but it will be at the expense of holding fast to the true teachings of Jesus, the apostles and the Gospel. The world will see the final head and counsel of this global body as a good thing that has the potential to bring peace to earth and save our planet. This final global religious body and secular world government could be likened to the forbidden tree that Eve ate of, because it looked good for food, a delight to her eyes, and appeared to be a tree that was to be desired to make one wise. (Gen. 3:6).

If the tree had looked horrible, unpleasant and obnoxious Eve would not have been deceived, likewise if this final world power appeared evil, the world would not embrace it or be deceived by it. It should not surprise us that the latter days ungodly beast power will appear as a kingdom of wonder and splendour since the underlying spirit influencing it will be the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. (Rev. 12:9) (Rev. 20:1-3). The latter days

two-horned beast (Rev. 13:11) (also called the false prophet) (Rev. 16:13) and the secular man of lawlessness (man of sin in KJV) (2 Thess. 2:3) combined-together will be the embodiment and final manifestation of Satan disguising himself as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14).

For further information click or tap [Overview of Topics in Revelation](#) and select the following titles.

- Babylon.
- Papal Church, the Pope and the Vatican.
- Popes Declare Salvation is Only Found in the Catholic Church.
- Ten-Horned Beast and the Man of Sin.
- The Great Prostitute Woman and Mystery Babylon.

FOOTNOTE

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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