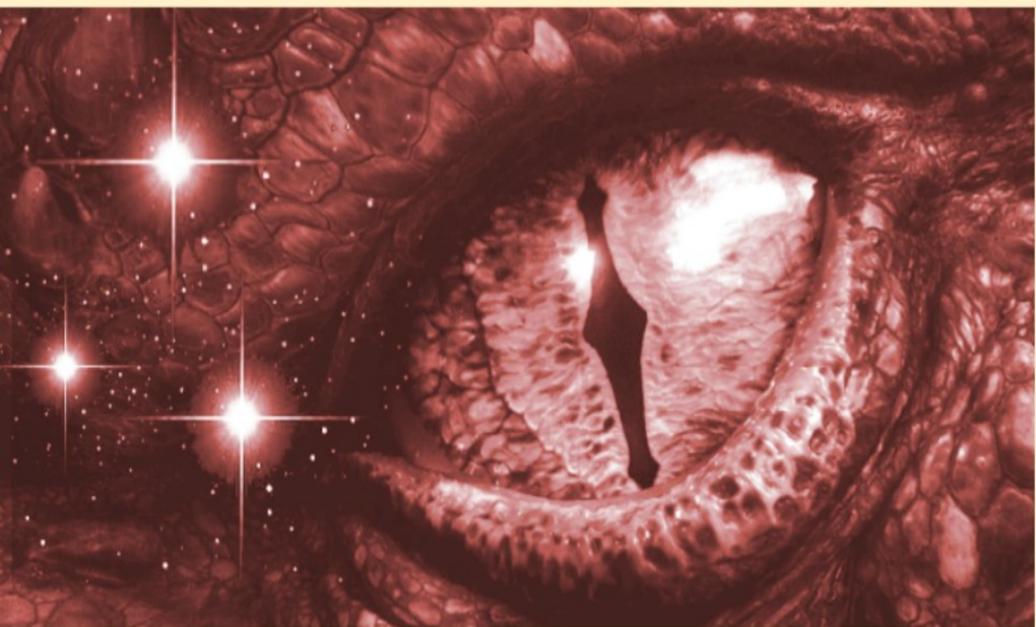


REVELATION 12

THE GREAT RED DRAGON & THE THIRD OF THE STARS (PART II)



GOD'S REMEMBRANCERS

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"The second and third chapters contain the messages to the seven churches. These represent the Church in its seven successive stages through the age, and also the seven characteristics to be found in the Church all through the age—the Ephesian condition dominating at the beginning, the Laodicean condition at the end... You should study, and apply to yourself, these messages."

- Herbert W. Armstrong-

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1

The Great Red Dragon & The Third of the Stars

In part 1 of the Revelation 12 article series, we have discussed about the WOMAN or God's Church being clothed with the SUN. She was seen "being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." (verse 2). Yet there is another wonder in heaven which the apostle John saw – the GREAT RED DRAGON, Satan the devil.

“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” (Revelation 12:3)

As previously thought, verse 3 describes Satan and the Holy Roman Empire. But even as we go further in the whole chapter, there is no mention of the beast or a scarlet-clothed woman (a great false church) as described in Revelation 17. Notice that the description “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads” has been associated with A GREAT RED DRAGON, while in chapter 17, it is connected directly to the BEAST. Why is it so? Is the GREAT RED DRAGON of chapter 12 also the BEAST of chapter 17? Of course not. Again, the GREAT RED DRAGON is Satan the devil while the BEAST is the Holy Roman Empire. So why did God inspire the apostle John to write this “seven heads and ten horns, and seven

crowns upon his heads” description alongside Satan the devil; while nowhere in chapter 12 did he mention the BEAST as he did in chapter 17?

Because God designed this prophecy in verse 3 to point us to a specific *time setting* – the time of the Holy Roman Empire when this beast having “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads” has been ridden by the scarlet-clothed woman (Revelation 17:3-4). This is a coded message that is meant to be understood only in God’s appointed time. And that time is NOW.

The Third of the Stars

We have been taught previously that this “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads” actually pertains to the “four world-ruling Gentile empires.” But if we will consider the exact time when John wrote the book of Revelation around A.D. 85 to 95, the *time frame* has to be from that time during the Ephesus era (of which his death was coterminous to the end of that era) up to the time of the Day of the Lord and Christ’s Second Coming.

Notice that this vision of the apostle John has been dated precisely: Consider again the key phrase “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads,” this points us to a *prophetic time line* which has to take place specifically during the reign of the beast of Revelation 17:

“(I)n 527, Justinian assumed the Eastern throne in Constantinople. It was his personal dream to restore the Roman Empire to its full former glory—under his rule. Justinian saw himself as the rightful ruler of the Roman world. By 554, he had successfully and completely smashed the barbarian hold on the Western empire. He quickly reunited the empire—both East and

West came under his control. History immortalized Justinian's achievement, calling it the "Imperial Restoration." The Roman Empire was revived, as prophesied (Rev. 13:3).

Justinian also fully understood that you cannot have a united empire without a united religion. He worked stealthily to unify Christianity throughout the empire. In 554, Justinian issued a document known as the Pragmatic Sanction which confirmed and increased the papacy's temporal power and gave specific guidelines for regulating civil and ecclesiastical affairs in Rome and Italy.

The events listed above are just some highlights from one of the most crucial phases of world history. All of these events took place during the Pergamos era. Remember, it was during this era that Satan's seat of government and religion was finally, thoroughly and completely established." (Church History—Part Five, The Sword of My Mouth, The Philadelphia Trumpet, May 1996)

Justinian revived the Roman Empire in A.D. 554 making it the *1st head* of the beast that was ridden by the scarlet-clothed woman thus making it the Holy Roman Empire. Mr. Armstrong wrote in his booklet, *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?*, that there will be seven revivals of the Holy Roman Empire with the *7th and final head* having 10 rulers under one supreme EU leader.

God only used that specific description of "seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads" to direct us to a precise *time frame*. Actually, God just wanted to emphasize only the two main characters in Revelation 12

– *God's Church and Satan the devil!* Yet, God through the apostle John made sure to accurately depict the exact *time element* of the fulfillment of this vision concerning the two entities. As we will prove, this *time element* is directly connected to the next verse:

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” (Revelation 12:4)

Let us consider the word “*third part*” which in *Strong's Concordance* is G5154 and from the Greek word “*tritos*”:

“From G5140; **third**; neuter (as noun) a third part, or (as adverb) a (or the) third time, thirdly: – **third** (-ly)”

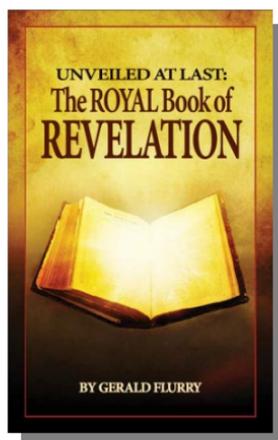
4th HORN		1st of remaining 7 horns— DEADLY WOUND HEALED (to continue 1,260 years) verse 5	554-1814 = 1,260 years beast continued	1st HEAD of BEAST (healed) ridden by scarlet-clothed woman	Since the “great whore” never rode any of the 7 heads of the 1st 4 beasts, but did mount and ride the last 7 horns of Daniel’s 4th beast it follows that the last 7 horns of Dan. 7 and Rev. 13 are the 7 HEADS of Rev. 17 (5 fallen at collapse of Napoleon).	“ IMPERIAL RESTORATION ” of empire by Justinian, A.D. 554. He recognized supremacy of this world’s Christianity.
5th HORN		2nd of remaining 7 HORNS		2nd HEAD ridden by woman	FRANKISH KINGDOM Began A.D. 774. Charlemagne crowned A.D. 800	
6th HORN		3rd of remaining 7 HORNS		3rd HEAD ridden by woman	HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE (German head) , Otto the Great crowned 962	
7th HORN		4th of remaining 7 HORNS		4th HEAD ridden by woman	HAPSBURG dynasty (Austrian head) , Charles V crowned 1520	
8th HORN		5th of remaining 7 HORNS		5th HEAD ridden by woman	NAPOLEON’S KINGDOM (French head) , crowned 1805	
In 1814, 1,260 years after its “deadly wound” was healed, the “ HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE ” was dissolved. “So closed a government that dated from Augustus Caesar” (West, p. 377).						
9th HORN		6th of remaining 7 HORNS	6th HEAD ridden by woman	(One IS) Rev. 17:10	ITALY , under Garibaldi, 1870, to the FASCIST REGIMES , 1945	
10th HORN		7th and last HORN	Beast ascends out of pit	7th head and 10 HORNS	(One yet to come) Revived ROMAN EMPIRE , 10 rulers under one leader.	

Even in *Thayer's Lexicon* it is defined as “*the third.*” Notice that the original meaning is intended to be “**THE THIRD**” and NOT necessarily a “third part” of something as it has been translated in the *King James Version* of the

Bible. So if we will substitute the word “THE THIRD” in verse 4, we will have:

“And his tail drew THE THIRD of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”

What are the “stars of heaven” being mentioned here that was cast to the earth? According to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, *stars* are a symbol of *angels*; and they are sometimes used as a symbol of human leaders, or human messengers. Now does the word “stars” in verse 4 refer to the fallen angels who rebelled against God prior to the recreation of the earth in Genesis 1? Or is it talking about another entity? To better understand this, let us consider again the context of the *timeline* of when this prophecy has been written.



“Mr. Armstrong talked about all of John’s books—his Gospel, his epistles, and the book of Revelation—being written around A.D. 85 to 95.” (p. 9, Royal Vision, September-October 2012)

It was in the *1st century* when the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, which means, when he saw the vision in chapter 12, it has NOT HAPPENED YET. Thus, “THE THIRD OF THE STARS” being mentioned there HAS YET TO HAPPEN after he finished writing that prophecy!

SEVEN ERAS

“The book of Revelation is the only book of

the Bible that gives us the time sequence of when a prophecy is to occur. Revelation 2 and 3 tell us the true Church history from the time of Christ's first coming to His Second Coming. The critics sometimes challenge this belief. But even common sense tells us THIS ACCOUNT IS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION BECAUSE IT IS PROPHECY FOR THAT 2,000-YEAR PERIOD. There were to be seven Church eras in that 2,000 years. Most eras would turn away from God. Each time that happened, He would raise up another era, or Church.

The "Rock," or Foundation, of all those eras is Jesus Christ. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea" (Revelation 1:10-11). Here we see the name of each era. Christ started the New Testament Church—the Ephesus era. "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks" (verse 12). The seven eras were symbolized by golden candlesticks, or lamps—lamps is a more accurate translation. THE LAMP WOULD BE THE ONLY LIGHT IN A VERY DARK WORLD. God's people clearly see *this glorious light*. *The world is often oblivious to it.*

"And he had in his right hand seven stars:

and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (verses 16-20).

God placed an angel over each Church era. The angels are called stars. Jesus Christ is in the “midst” of each era (verse 13). That means each era would be doing the dynamic Work of God, IN PROPORTION TO HOW MUCH IT RELIED ON THIS POWERFUL CHRIST!” (pp. 14-15, The Royal Book of Revelation, 2011 edition)

Since the vision in Revelation 12 is all about the WOMAN which is comprised by the *seven successive eras* as written in chapters 2 and 3, therefore, “THE THIRD OF THE STARS” among the *seven stars*, apparently points us to the Pergamos era – THE THIRD ERA of God’s Church!

2

Pergamos Era

Why the Pergamos era? As we shall see without any shadow of a doubt, that it was during THIS THIRD ERA that Satan was able to successfully infiltrate God's Church and implement his counterfeit doctrines (the MOON as explained in part 1) – the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans! What is even more interesting is that the Pergamos era Church has dwelt where Satan's seat was! "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is" (verse 13).

It is interesting to note that this prophecy of the Pergamos era is very much like what the PCG through the leadership of Stephen Flurry brought the supposedly last phase of God's work to Edstone, Warwickshire, England which is known to be the Kingdom of the WITCHES, a place *rich in witchcraft and paganism!*

Can you see the parallel prophetic significance of the "THIRD among the seven stars" Pergamos era with that of the present fulfillment during this Laodicean era wherein the Philadelphia Church of God did exactly the same thing, i.e., they are now dwelling where Satan's seat is! Let us consider further the history of the Pergamos era:

"Although the Pergamos era works were exemplary at times, this Church epoch was not without some very serious spiritual problems. Christ warned this era, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou

hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Rev. 2:14-16). Some had allowed doctrinal errors to creep into the Church.

Christ names these doctrinal errors as the “doctrine of Balaam” and the “doctrine of the Nicolaitans.” Christ warned of “them” who held to these doctrines. Not everyone was holding to these doctrines. Only them. Some were holding to these doctrines, some were not. The Greek word for “hold” means “prepared, made ready, or in readiness.” In other words, some from Pergamos were in such a sad spiritual condition that they were ready for such doctrinal error...” (Church History—Part Six, The Sword of My Mouth, The Philadelphia Trumpet, June 1996)

Again as explained in Part 1, the true doctrines of Christ is symbolized by the SUN while the counterfeit doctrines, the MOON (Revelation 12:1-2). Satan was planning a very vicious attack on God’s Church using the MOON with its BRILLIANCE and this is the reason why God inspired the vision in verse 3: “BEHOLD a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”

“BEHOLD”, meaning we are urged TO LOOK and SEE, TO KNOW and BE AWARE. Be aware of what? That the GREAT RED DRAGON, Satan the devil, will do something to God’s Church coinciding with the time of the Holy

Church History—Part Six

The Sword of My Mouth

By Dennis Leap

The Philadelphia Trumpet, June 1996

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The most exciting history today that anyone should come to know is the knowledge about God's true Church. Unfortunately, this history is the most difficult to uncover. However, using the Bible as our foundation and researching some secular sources, we can trace God's true Church through the centuries. This month we give you the history of the decline of Pergamos.

Although the Pergamos era works were exemplary at times, this Church epoch was not without some very serious spiritual problems. Christ warned this era, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:14-16). Some had allowed doctrinal errors to creep into the Church.

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The Doctrine of Balaam

Let's learn more about these two doctrines. If Christ held such strong emotion against them, so should all true Christians. What is the doctrine of Balaam? Christ gives us insight into this false doctrine in verse 14.

Christ states that Balaam caused the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. To understand the doctrine of Balaam we should review some of the

Roman Empire beginning in 554 A.D. which evidently was concurrent to the time of the Pergamos era!

“And his tail drew THE THIRD of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth:”

(verse 4)

The word “*drew*” is G4951 in *Strong’s Concordance* from the Greek word “*suro*”:

Probably akin to G138; to trail: – drag, draw, hale.

From the dictionary here is the meaning of “*hale*”

hale – to cause to do through pressure or necessity

The word “*hale*” is synonymous to the word “*coerce*” and “*terrorize*”

coerce:

- 1. To pressure, intimidate, or force (someone) into doing something**
- 2. To bring about or gain pressure, threat or force**

terrorize – coerce by violence or with threats

Now just look closely at how precise the fulfillment of this prophecy has been – Satan the devil was able to *coerce* and *terrorize* the THIRD ERA of God’s Church. He was successful in giving *pressure* and *intimidation* to the Pergamos Church. He was able to *force them into doing something that which is contrary to the pure doctrine of God* – the end result was more *violence* and *threats*(emphasis mine in bold):

MILITANT PAULICIANS

“In love, Jesus Christ warned **the people of Pergamos to get back to the pure doctrine of the Bible. If they would**

not, then He would send a physical sword after them. They had a choice. **They could either faithfully follow the rule of Christ's sword or die by the sword. It is interesting to note that in the latter years of this era they were continually hassled by the sword.**

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course states: **"In the end, multiple thousands did perish by the literal sword, because the Church did not repent of its error—which grew and grew.**

"Ever since the Arabs began to contest the Byzantine power over Armenia, about 650 A.D., **persecution had driven some Paulicians to hide in Moslem territory** About 750, the Emperor Constantine Copronymus reconquered the upper Euphrates region from Armenia and removed many Paulicians to fill the deserted cities of Thrace. ***The day of the sword had begun!***

"From this time on Paulicians were split into parties. **Violence** flared among them at Mananali between the followers of Zachariah, son of Gegnesius, and Joseph who took the name of Epaphroditus. Joseph led his people across the border, where he was received by other Paulicians. Under attack there by a local ruler, he led them on into Pisidia....

"Elsewhere, divisions multiplied. Half-Jewish [leader named] Baanes gained great local influence [among Paulicians] with a militant doctrine of retaliation! They had

forgotten—or never knew— that Christ was the one to wield the sword!...

“The Empress Theodora (829-867) continued the persecution with unabated zeal. Furious and desperate, they reconciled the use of Bible and sword. Revolting from the dominion of Theodora, they submitted to the Caliph of Bagdad.

“Armies of Moslems and carnal-minded Paulicians combined ranged through the heart of Asia Minor. **But trusting in their worldly alliances with the Arabs instead of relying on Jesus’ protection, the Paulicians were betrayed and slaughtered. One hundred thousand perished!**

“The sword had prevailed!” (Lesson 50, p. 15). (Church History—Part Six, The Sword of My Mouth, The Philadelphia Trumpet, June 1996)

The GREAT RED DRAGON was successful in dragging the THIRD ERA of God’s Church; what do you think happened to the Pergamos era that Satan was able to fulfill the prophecy in verse 4?

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before

the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.” (Revelation 2:12-15)

Some in the Pergamos era have compromised the true doctrines of Christ and held to the *doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans*. Who are Balaam and the Nicolaitans? For a better understanding of their identities and their false doctrines, let us continue reading from the *Trumpet* article about Church history:

THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

Let's learn more about these two doctrines. If Christ held such strong emotion against them, so should all true Christians. What is the doctrine of Balaam? Christ gives us insight into this false doctrine in verse 14. Christ states that Balaam caused the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.

To understand the doctrine of Balaam we should review some of the details of what Balaam did to ancient Israel historically. The events concerning Balaam's link with Israel is found in Moses' book of Numbers. Who's Who in the Bible shows that his name comes from the Hebrew word **bilam** and means **ruin**. What Balaam caused in ancient Israel certainly was ruin. Christ warned Pergamos that if they continued in the error of Balaam they would surely come to ruin. The name Balaam could *also be translated* as “conqueror of the people.” Nicolas is the equivalent Greek name.

Balaam was a Mesopotamian soothsayer.

Numbers states that Balaam was the son of Beor. He lived at Pethor. He was a well-known magician—a pagan priest. Some scholars believe he was a prophet of God. Both Peter and Jude show that he was a false prophet (II Pet. 2:15; Jude 11). In fact, Mr. Armstrong showed that Balaam was the “Pontifex Maximus of the pagan world—the chief oracle of paganism” (Good News, Jan. 1982).

Balaam was Nimrod’s successor. The names Balaam and Nicolas were often used to denote the office Nimrod held.

Nimrod was one of the first human leaders to rebel against God’s government and laws after the flood. Nimrod established man’s political and religious systems based on false principles. Pethor, near the Euphrates river, was the seat of the Babylonian Mystery Religion. As high priest, Balaam used divination and enchantments. Mr. Armstrong believed that he may *have even been possessed by Satan the devil. Balaam held a position of considerable status and influence with his people...*

Balak devised a plan to destroy Israel. He sent men of high rank and great wealth to entice Balaam to help them. He intended to use Balaam the magician, to curse the Israelites... But eventually Balaam did help Balak get to Israel. He greatly desired the wealth offered to him. Greedy for material gain, he counseled Balak to entice the Israelites into idolatry and whoredom. **He manipulated God’s law against Israel.** Moses recorded Balaam’s advice to Balak in Numbers 31. “Behold, these caused the

children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord” (Num. 31:16). The Israelites fell prey to their own temptations. As a result, God caused a severe plague to fall upon the Israelites...

The doctrine of Balaam is simply Baal worship. Baal worshippers follow the Babylonian Mystery Religion. Baal worshippers lived a life of licentiousness. **When one follows the doctrine of Balaam, one is following pagan religious practices...**

Some in Pergamos were also falling prey to this same error. **For true Christians, following the doctrine of Balaam is allowing pagan practices and beliefs into our worship of Christ.** Christ warned the people of His day against such practices. Jesus said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:8-9)...

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS

What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans? Jesus Christ states that he hates this doctrine. The word “hate” in Greek is *miseo* and means to detest. This was no small issue to Jesus Christ—He detested the doctrine of the Nicolaitans!...

What were the deeds of the Nicolaitans? The Catholic Encyclopedia states : “[these

Nicolaitans] led lives of unrestrained indulgence.” This sect traced their roots to a man named Nicholas. The Catholic Encyclopedia states that they “claimed to have derived from Nicholas the doctrine of promiscuity.” In other words, the Nicolaitans believed that they could be both religious and promiscuous

Who was this Nicholas? Some scholars have confused him with one of the original seven deacons listed in Acts 6:5. But this is a gross error. Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible identifies a Nicholas of Antioch as “Bishop Nicholas of Samaria,” a heretic associate of Simon Magus.

The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course states, “But why then was he called Nicholas ‘of Antioch’? Eusebius gives us a clue. Before Simon Magus went to Rome—probably a.d. 42—he was in Antioch for a while. Eusebius tells us that Jesus’ Apostle Peter was sent to Antioch (Gal. 2:11—a.d. 42) to counteract the poison of Simon Magus.

“From there [Antioch] he [Simon Magus] went to Rome. *It is possible that the two names refer to the same man and Nicholas of Samaria was Simon himself or Nicholas was Simon’s successor after Simon left for Rome. The Nicolaitans, at any rate, are identified with the counterfeit ‘Christianity’ founded by Simon Magus.*

“The doctrine of the Nicolaitans, too, was one of no law—‘unrestrained indulgence,’ ‘promiscuity.’ Their doctrine and the doctrine of Balaam sprang from the same

source. In fact, as we have already noted, the name 'Nicolaitans' might well be translated 'Balaamites,' and vice versa, for **both Balaam in the days of Moses and Simon Magus in the first century A.D. occupied the 'office' of Nimrod**" (Lesson 50, 1968, p. 10)...

The doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans appear to be very similar. Why did Jesus bring charges that Pergamos had members holding to both. The Correspondence Course states, "The doctrine of Balaam was the original, universally received religion of the region. Asia Minor (where the city of Pergamos was), with the Tigris-Euphrates valley and Armenia, comprised the very heartland and stronghold of Nimrod's religion throughout all history to that time. The Pethor of Balaam was right at the center of this area.

"And now the Church of God was centered there. Naturally, unconverted 'members' who sat in the congregations of God's Church were influenced by that doctrine! They were just local people who had never really given up the common doctrine of their ancestors.

"Significantly, the Armenian church to modern times practiced, or allowed, animal sacrifices for sin—and the eating of sacrificial flesh! Could Revelation 2:14 be more specific? (Church History—Part Six, The Sword of My Mouth, The Philadelphia Trumpet, June 1996)

Notice that Simon Magus' name has kept on being ever present even during the Pergamos era because as it

appear, “**both Balaam in the days of Moses and Simon Magus in the first century A.D. occupied the ‘office’ of Nimrod**” – *the office which is actually Satan’s.*

Casting a Stumbling Block

Satan the devil through Balaam and Nicolas, who apparently were Nimrod's successors, was able to ruin God's people through their influence. Their doctrines were able to crept in to Pergamos era which gave way for Satan to drag some of God's people in that era into ruin. Yet there were still faithful Christians who held on to God's truth.

CHRISTIANS KEPT THE PASSOVER

“Jesus Christ kept the Passover. So did the Apostle John. And so did some Christians in Scotland even until the 7th century A.D.

This information comes from no less an ecclesiastical authority than the church historian Bede. His Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation would astound many who have assumed that Christ and the early apostles all kept Easter.

He writes that “John, following the customs of the Law, used to begin the Feast of Easter [actually the Passover] on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, whether it fell on the Sabbath or on any other day” (III, 25)...

Bede thus reiterates what the Bible itself plainly tells us — that Christ partook of the old Passover and then substituted the New Testament symbols of the bread and wine on the 14th of the first month.

The custom of keeping the New Testament Passover, after the example of Christ and John, persisted among isolated groups for centuries. Bede tells us that some faithful were still keeping it in Scotland in the 7th century! (II, 19.) (p. 19, *The Plain Truth About Easter*)

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The Apostle John was the author of five books of the New Testament and the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Yet he kept the Passover on the 14th day of the first month (Nisan) just as God commanded in the time of Moses. That is the plain statement of this early Catholic theologian!

But where did John's custom come from? From the very example of Jesus Christ! "Nor did our Lord, the Author and Giver of the Gospel, cut the old Passover or institute the Sacrament of the New Testament to be celebrated by the Church in memory of His Passion on... [any other day], but on the fourteenth" (*Ecclesiastical History*, III, 25).

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But something tragic happened during the 7th century that drove God's Church into the wilderness. What took place was like a *death blow* to the third era of God's

Church.

THE SYNOD OF WHITBY (AD 664)

As historians have rightly observed, “there seems to be no reasonable doubt but that the cleavage between Roman and Celtic Christians was very wide, and could not be bridged without one party’s giving way to the other.”

This, then, was the reason and setting for the Synod of Whitby. There were grave differences in many areas of doctrine and ecclesiastical polity between the Celtic Christians and the church of Rome. The prevailing mindset of the day was that the all those who were called by the name of Christian should agree on all things. Since the differences between the two organizations were of such a gravity and nature as compromise was not a possibility, it was certain that either the Celts or the Romans would have to give way entirely to the other; so the Synod of Whitby was called to settle the matter...

The Significance of the Synod for the Celtic Church and Roman Church

“With the declarations of the Synod handed down by the king, a process of Romanization began, which would take centuries to finally complete but which was immediate in its impact. The significance of the agreement should not be underestimated. Formerly, “wherever and whenever these (contacts between Celtic Christians and the representatives of the bishop of Rome) initially took place there was conflict,” but

now, for the most part, there was peace since the Roman way was accepted by most. One significant impact that must not be overlooked, then, is simply the resolution of conflict. Where Christians had formerly not been able to be civil with each other, or even eat with each other, now there was mainly peace.

Everything in the church's structure and theological life would begin to change from this point; even its geographical centre moved as a result of this Synod. "York supplanted Lindisfarne as northern England's spiritual center, and the conformist discipline of the Roman organization was at last supreme in all of England." Lindisfarne, which had been identified with Irish-Celtic spirituality had become outmoded overnight with the rejection of Bishop Colman, and the much more easily Roman affected York became the hub of theological and ecclesiological thought and activity...

Life after Whitby was not nearly as easy as it sounds, however. The resolution of the conflict was far from being absolute. Many Scots, for example were forced to adjust immediately or move. Centuries of debate would follow on the heels of Whitby, and the Celtic Christians continued to oppose Rome until the eleventh century when they were finally assimilated into the Roman religion.

Following Whitby, the Roman mission in the Celtic world prospered and grew in force and influence. Wilfred's

achievements have been recorded thus: “He introduced into the English churches many Catholic customs, with the result that the Catholic Rite daily gained support, and all the Scots remaining in England either conformed to it or returned to their own land.”

Though the Roman victory was far from complete in AD 664 at the conclusion of the Synod of Whitby, **King Oswy’s decision had indeed signalled the beginning of the end for autonomous Celtic Christian spirituality and the coming to power of the Roman church in Celtic lands. In short, “the Synod of Whitby...confirmed the Romanization of British Christianity.”**

Source: <http://julianfreeman.ca/articles/synod-whitby-ad-664>

This is a **VITAL TURNING POINT** for God’s Church then – “*Many Scots, for example were **forced to adjust immediately or move** – they were driven into the WILDERNESS!* The true Church of God during the Pergamos era started to **VANISH** from this point onward, and the true doctrines of Christ including the knowledge of the true gospel of the kingdom of God suffered a *death knell*.

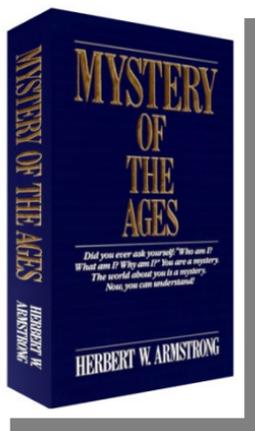
“**Synod of Whitby**, a meeting held by the Christian Church of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria in 663/664 to decide whether to follow Celtic or Roman usages. It marked a **VITAL TURNING POINT** in the development of the church in *England*.”

Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/641992/Synod-of-Whitby>

We must remember that this *time period* was still very much into the Pergamos era which Christ has this to say:

“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. (Revelation 2:14-15)

During this 664 A.D. debacle over the Easter and Passover issue, it was Wilfred, holding to the doctrine of Balaam, who taught King Oswy to actually cast a stumbling block before the true Church of God then. To emphasize the seriousness of the impact, let us consider this again: **“With the declarations of the Synod handed down by the king, a process of Romanization began, which would take centuries to finally complete but which was immediate in its impact. The significance of the agreement should not be underestimated.”** – this is the specific actual fulfillment of the prophecy in Revelation 2:14-15!



The declaration favoring Easter over Passover at the Synod of Whitby in 664 A.D. was a massive stumbling block that had a ripple effect up until the Sardis era that almost caused its very life (Revelation 3:1-6). But as for those few in Pergamos who remained faithful, they were forced out and driven into the wilderness:

“And so the baton passed from the Smyrna Christians to those of the Pergamos era. **These had been called to carry the truth through one of history’s most difficult periods—the Dark Ages.**

The power and influence of the great universal church spread far and wide, **driving those who clung to the truth of God ever further into the wilderness.** But they were never far from threat of persecution and martyrdom. And so very few of the Pergamos Christians remained faithful.” (p. 220, *Mystery of the Ages*, 2009 edition)

The wilderness being discussed here does not necessarily pertain to a specific place but it describe a condition wherein God’s people were scattered all over; and while they were there God gave them the HIDDEN MANNA and a WHITE STONE:

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (verse 17)

The word “hidden” from *Strong’s Concordance* is transliterated in the Greek as “krupto” which means:

to conceal properly by covering: *hide self, keep secret, secret*

While in *Thayer’s Lexicon*, it is defined this way:

1. *to hide, conceal, to be hid*
2. **escape notice**
3. *metaphorically to conceal (that it may not be known)*

And the word “manna” as we know is the *word of God* or *instructions from Jesus Christ* (John 6:31-35).

As for the word “white” in *Thayer’s* definition, it can also mean, “*white garments as the sign of innocence and purity*”; while “stone” in *Strong’s* means, “**verdict of acquittal** or **ticket of admission**”

Apparently, as the faithful few of the Pergamos era were forced and driven out into the wilderness, God has given them an *escape notice* or a *secret instruction* on how to *conceal and hide themselves properly*. These overcomers were obviously cleansed from the filth that was spreading at that time which was brought about by the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans; they were also forgiven by God as they repented toward Him, much like starting with a *clean slate*.

Now what is the relevance of this prophecy about the Pergamos era, the THIRD of the seven stars, for our time today? Why did God withhold the understanding for so long and rather chose to reveal it *precisely* during this LAST END? Because the GREAT RED DRAGON, Satan the devil has done another *masterful job* in injecting the **doctrine of Balaam** to God’s own Church – the Philadelphia Church of God!

Those inside the PCG may argue, “That prophecy about the Pergamos era has come and gone. We are already in the Laodicean era, so it is no longer applicable to us.” Oh really? Then let us consider what Mr. Gerald Flurry wrote about such a dangerous mindset:

“Under Herbert W. Armstrong and the Philadelphia Church today, we have written a lot about the Church eras discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation. But we have never gotten it right! And there is a reason why. Our writers have never built on the foundational teaching of

Mr. Armstrong! In this message, we will correct that error...”



FROM THE EDITOR

THE TRUE HISTORY OF GOD'S CHURCH

Gerald Flurry

Under Herbert W. Armstrong and the Philadelphia Church today, we have written a lot about the Church eras discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation. But we have never gotten it right! And there is a reason why. Our writers have never built on the foundational teaching of Mr. Armstrong! In this message, we will correct that error.

In his booklet *The Key to the Book of Revelation*, Mr. Armstrong wrote, “The second and third chapters contain the messages to the seven churches. These represent the Church in its seven successive stages through the age, and also the seven characteristics to be found in the Church all through the age—the Ephesian condition dominating at the beginning, the Laodicean condition at the end.”

He then wrote, “You should study, and apply to yourself, these messages.” Each of us should take that advice to heart.

In a *World Tomorrow* broadcast, Mr. Armstrong said that the seven churches, which anciently were congregations that lay along a single mail route, “formed a perfect

... pattern.” **In addition to being a prophecy of seven successive eras of the Church, they were also “typical of the general conditions among God’s people anywhere and at any time.” That means we should be very attuned to all of these messages.**

In these messages, Christ gives encouragement and praise, as well as a lot of correction. Christ does correct His people, and sometimes it can get to be pretty difficult to do the Work of God! But it all leads to the Second Coming, and that should keep us inspired forever.” (The True History of God’s Church, Royal Vision, September-October 2012, pp. 1-2)

IN ADDITION TO BEING A PROPHECY OF SEVEN SUCCESSIVE ERAS OF THE CHURCH, THEY WERE ALSO “TYPICAL OF THE GENERAL CONDITIONS AMONG GOD’S PEOPLE ANYWHERE AND AT ANY TIME.”

For emphasis, Mr. Flurry reiterated what Mr. Armstrong said: **“In addition to being a prophecy of seven successive eras of the Church, they were also ‘typical of the general conditions among God’s people anywhere and at any time.’ That means we should be very attuned to all of these messages.”** Let’s ask ourselves, **ARE WE VERY ATTUNED TO ALL THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCH ERAS?** As he further wrote: **“THE GREATEST WARNING IN THE END IS GIVEN TO GOD’S PEOPLE – not the world”** (p. 100, Malachi’s Message)

Are we now ready to listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches? Satan knew how effective his strategy was during the Pergamos era by infusing the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans into God’s Church. Now he is

using that same strategy AGAIN with the Philadelphia Church of God resulting in the same success that he achieved from the third era. Here are some of the list:

DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS

- “unrestrained indulgence def. (indulgent – given to permissiveness)
- promiscuity def. (promiscuous – indiscriminate in the) choice of sexual partners
- **Stephen Flurry** told his son Jude not to worry about the Sabbath while they are in the midst of an Irish dance elimination round competition which was scheduled on a Friday. Jude had some hesitation to proceed because he might be called to perform during a Friday sunset. (from Stephen Flurry’s December 2014 sermon titled, “Tip of the Iceberg”)
- **Turnabout** – is an opportunity for the women to stop doing the waiting and start doing the asking... (T)he weekend is designed to give ladies the opportunity to “take on the responsibility of planning for and asking men on dates.” It was actually rooted from “Sadie Hawkins Day”

DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

- allowing pagan practices and beliefs into the worship of
- **Irish dance** – “There are only vague references to the early history of Irish dancing, but there is evidence that among its first practitioners were the Druids, who danced in religious rituals honouring the oak tree and the sun. Traces of their circular dances survive in the ring dances of today.”
- **Mother’s Day** – image of Astarte (or Ishtar from where the name Easter came) “one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven....”

· **Cremation** – In Leviticus 18:21 it is written: “And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.”

– “who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel”

· **the EDSTONE work** in Warwickshire, England where it was once a part of the Kingdom of Hwicce or witches and the seat of paganism

How was God able to correct the *error of Balaam* then? Through *Phinehas*, the son of Eleazar!

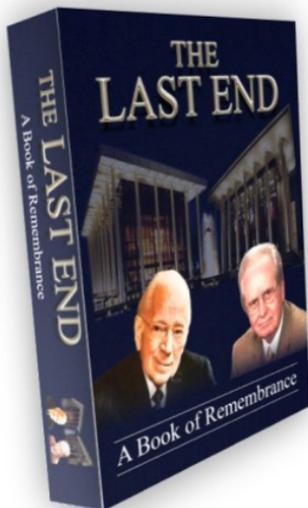
“And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, **he rose up from among the congregation**, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.”
(Numbers 25:7-8)

Phinehas rose up from among the congregation because he took particular notice of the officers’ hesitancy in punishing the high ranking offenders – Zimri and Cozbi. He executed God’s judgment even though he was not an official (Psalms 106: 30). Balaam’s heart was full of lust. Moses’ and the judges’ heart were partial and were not right before God. Phinehas’ heart was zealous for God and he made the ATONEMENT for the children of Israel. (vv. 11-13)

When Satan infused the doctrine of Balaam to the Pergamos Church, how has God dealt with this problem? Through the HIDDEN MANNA and the WHITE STONE! (Revelation 2:17)

Now that the same *error of Balaam* is being proliferated among the membership of the Philadelphia Church of

God, how is God dealing with this problem in this last end? He is doing it through another *Phinehas* and another *hidden manna* and *white stone*, which is written in the prophesied **BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE!**



ADDITIONAL READING

The A.R.K. of God Foundation produces many informative and interesting publications that you may want to request.

Here are a few you might consider:

REVELATION 12: A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

When Christ delivered the Book of Revelations to John, the message is entirely for the seven eras of the Church of God. This is the key aspect that Bible scholars and critics failed to grasp! The message is given to the Temple Priests, to Jesus Christ's bride - the Church. Today God has revealed the true meaning behind the symbolism of the woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet found in the 12th chapter of the Book of Revelation. A prophecy between a struggle of deception and truth in the Church of God.

REVELATION 12: SATAN'S GREAT WRATH THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Global distress has increased in dramatic scale. Satan's wrath wreaked havoc in world affairs but he has also been more vicious to his main target - the Church of God. The Philadelphia Church of God's headquarters in Oklahoma is now the World's Capital of Earthquakes. God is sending a very important message to this Lukewarm Church to turn away from Paganism and execute righteous judgment. Are you willing to listen? Now you can understand.

CONTACT INFORMATION

To reach the A.R.K. of God Foundation, to order literature or to request additional information.

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