

HOPE FOR HUMANITY

REVELATION TODAY

PRESENTATION 15 • THE USA IN BIBLE PROPHECY

SLIDE • ELEPHANT. There's an elephant buried in—of all places—Rome, Italy. It was discovered by maintenance workers in 1962. They were installing a heating and cooling system. How the elephant came to be there is fascinating. And instructive.

Back in the 16th Century, a man named Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici occupied a position of some considerable influence, and governmental leaders around Europe would vie to win his favor. Manuel I, the King of Portugal, decided he would do something grand for Giovanni. But this wasn't entirely altruistic.

SLIDE • SHIPS. Manuel wanted to expand Portugal's control of shipping routes to India, so he sent a caravan of rare goods to Rome. Those rare goods included gold, jewels and textiles—as well as an Indian elephant named Hanno. Clearly, Giovanni was an influential and important man. Why else would you go to this extent to curry favor with him?

Elephants hadn't been seen in Rome since the days of the Roman Empire. And along with the elephant, (**SLIDE • CHEETAH**) Manuel also sent a cheetah, leopards and a Persian horse. Giovanni was so taken with Hanno that he personally thanked Manuel, writing in a letter, "The sight of this quadruped provides us with the greatest amusement and has become for our people an object of extraordinary wonder." When the elephant died just a few years later, Giovanni was devastated, and even had the great (**SLIDE • PENCIL DRAWING**) artist Raphael produce a fresco in memory of the pachyderm.

Hanno the elephant was buried beneath a courtyard. Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici died in 1521.

Let's go to Revelation, chapter 13.

SLIDES (4) • REVELATION 13:1–4. "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Keep this in mind.

SLIDE • 2 CORINTHIANS 11:14. "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."

The Bible says,

SLIDE • REVELATION 14:9–10. “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation...

This is the most serious warning found in Scripture. Those who receive the MOB will not be saved.

SLIDE • BOOK OF DANIEL. We go to the book of Daniel and begin to learn what beasts are about.

SLIDES (2) • DANIEL 7:1–3. “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.”

Daniel saw some beasts in his dream.

The word “beast” is not a bad word. Daniel 7:17, 23 A beast = a nation.

Come up out of the sea?

Revelation 17:15 “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.” Sea = peoples.

Daniel saw the rise of nations. Remember symbols.

SLIDES (3):

1. Beast = kingdom (Daniel 7:23)
2. Seas = people (Revelation 17:15)
3. Winds = strife, warfare (Jeremiah 25:32)

Go through beasts (read from Bible).

SLIDE • LION. v4-Lion. That’s Babylon.

SLIDE • BEAR. Then a bear, which is the second kingdom, Medo-Persia.

SLIDE • LEOPARD. This is Greece, the third nation on the world stage.

SLIDE • FOURTH BEAST. And then we see Rome.

The fourth beast has ten horns. How do we understand that?

SLIDE • DANIEL 7:24. “The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them.”

SLIDE • DANIEL 7:8. “I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn.” Who is this little horn? We’re going to give 10 identifying marks, out of Bible. If we get them we can clearly i.d. beast Revelation 13.

SLIDES (9) • NINE POINTS.

1. Daniel 7:8 • Little.
2. Daniel 7:8 • Among them—Western Europe.
3. Daniel 7:24 • After them—after 476 A.D.

4. Daniel 7:8 • Plucks up three.
5. Daniel 7:8 • Eyes of man
6. Daniel 7:25 • Great words—Blasphemies.
7. Daniel 7:25 • Persecutes.
8. Daniel 7:25 • Think to change times and laws.
9. Daniel 7:25 • Reigns for a time, times and half a time.

So where do you find the identity of this nation? And keep in mind, we're not looking for a person, but a nation or kingdom.

It's interesting that several hundred years ago, Protestant Christianity had no problem at all identifying this power. It's curious, isn't it, that across the Christian landscape today there's utter confusion as to who this is.

SLIDE • MARTIN LUTHER. In fact, when Martin Luther initiated the Reformation in earnest in 1517, the pope was Pope Leo X, otherwise known as. Giovannie di Lorenzo de' Medici—the man to whom the **(SLIDE • POPE LEO X)** elephant was given. He reigned as pope of the Roman Catholic church for 8 and 1/2 years.

So what was going on that a European king would be giving gifts of elephants and gold and leopards and jewels... to a pope?

SLIDE • VATICAN. What it tells you is how incredibly powerful the popes of Rome were in those days. When foreign kings wanted to expand their shipping lanes, it was necessary for them to get the support of the pope. He was exceedingly influential. And he was a church leader. And that's because the Vatican was more than a church. It was a church state. Its intent was the rule the world, and to a greater or lesser extent, it did. It governed in Europe in a very strong way. And it was not bashful about dealing with those who didn't yield to its power.

Throughout history, this has been very well known. The English poet, John **(SLIDE • JOHN MILTON)** Milton, author of the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, wrote a poem entitled, *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont*, two years before he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Milton was no small thing. He's still regarded as one of the greatest English poets of all time, and when your company on that list is people like Shakespeare, Chaucer, Elliot and Tennyson, you're playing in the Big Leagues.

I want you to listen to this poem. It was published in 1655, and it speaks of the horrors suffered by the Waldensians, a group of Protestant Christians who lived in Northern Italy.

SLIDES (3) • POEM.

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones;
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they

To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

There are several fascinating references in that poem. First, it's interesting that Milton would write this poem at all, but it shows the antipathy Protestant England felt towards the Roman church. He mentions the "triple tyrant," a reference to the pope's triple-crown tiara, a symbol of papal authority. And Milton writes of the Babylonian woe, a very direct reference to Protestantism's view that the Roman Catholic church was the **(SLIDE • WOMAN)** whore of Babylon mentioned in the book of Revelation, depicted as being drunk with the blood of martyrs.

SLIDE • VATICAN. The church of Rome was immensely powerful, and that's easy to forget from our vantage point in this modern world. If you were living in Luther's day and you wished to read a Bible, you'd find it well-nigh impossible to do so. Less than 20 years after the Reformation began, the English Bible translator William Tyndale was burned at the stake just outside Brussels, Belgium by the Catholic church. His crime was... translating the Bible. There was out and out hostility to the idea of allowing people to read the Bible in their own language, as the church had declared the Bible should only be read and interpreted by themselves. It was written largely in Latin, a dead language kept alive only by the church, and spoken by very few people at all.

So today, when we try to identify the antichrist of Bible prophecy, it's important that we don't forget our history. Today, it's very common for Bible teachers to say such things as, "The beast of Revelation is a Jew in the Middle East." Or, "The antichrist of the Bible is King Juan Carlos of Spain." This was a popular idea a few decades ago, but of course now that King Juan Carlos is 83 years old, he'd better hurry up if he has any actual plans of dominating the world.

SLIDE • WITTENBERG. Martin Luther was born 60 miles from Wittenberg, located today in what we used to call East Germany. It's 60 miles southeast of Berlin, and just a two-hour drive to the border with Poland.

During his training for the priesthood, Luther discovered the Bible for the first time—**(SLIDE • BIBLE)** a Latin Bible chained to a wall. He'd never seen a whole Bible before, and as he read and studied the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament, his heart was moved.

He was troubled by the sins in his personal life, and wanted to find peace with God. So he did what the monastery said to do: he fasted, prayed for hours, he even resorted to self-flagellation, to rid himself of the evils of his human nature. He would later say that "if ever a monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it."

It was in 1508—the same year **(SLIDE • PAINTING)** Michelangelo began painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, that he accepted a call to teach theology at the University of Wittenberg.

As a young monk Luther had been living a strict lifestyle of self-denial, but when he arrived in Rome he found priests and monks and bishops living in luxury and debauchery. This troubled him. One event in particular profoundly affected him. Pope Julius II had recently made a decree that a special indulgence was available to those who would walk on their knees up what had become known as **(SLIDE • STAIRCASE VIDEO)** "Pilate's staircase." The staircase was believed to have been the very staircase Jesus walked on during His trial. Of course it wasn't. The church made many fantastical claims about relics and historical items, and the largely ignorant people had no way of knowing

whether these claims were true. But Luther was determined to acquire this indulgence, and so after devoutly climbing these stairs on his knees, and praying as he went, it dawned on him that he'd been practicing salvation by works—the idea that a person's good deeds aren't simply a response to the saving grace of God, but that they earn favor for a person with God. Luther considered what he had seen in the Bible, that **(SLIDE • Romans 1:17)** “the just shall live by faith.” That statement in the Bible changed Luther's life and ministry.

Not long after he began teaching in Wittenberg, the church embarked on a grand new project—the building of the largest church in the world— **(SLIDE • ST PETER'S)** St. Peter's basilica in what is now Vatican City. To help pay for the project, the church offered its people to chance to purchase indulgences for their sins. An indulgence is a way to reduce the amount of punishment you have to undergo for your sins. So while it's not “exactly” the same as buying salvation, you'd be buying pardon for sin—which of course flies in the face of the entire Bible.

SLIDE • EPHESIANS 2:8 tell us, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

SLIDE • 1 JOHN 1:9 says that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Luther was troubled. And his trouble deepened.

Commissioned by the Archbishop of Mainz, a man named Johannes Tetzel began visiting the towns and cities of Germany, selling these indulgences. That might have got by Luther in the past, but Luther now understood something of the message of God's grace, and so he found this trafficking of God's grace to be totally sacrilegious. How could anyone purchase pardon for sin, or a reduction in their time in purgatory—even if there was a purgatory?

Luther was strong in his opposition to the practice. He wrote to his bishop, Albert of Mainz, and expressed his objections. And then on October 31, 1517, Luther made his objections public by **(SLIDE • CHURCH)** nailing them to the door of this church. The list of objections became known as his 95 Theses, and the Protestant Reformation was launched. Europe, Western Civilization, even the world would never be the same again.

So what's in the 95 Theses? The first one lays the groundwork not only for all the others, but for the most basic message of the Reformation so far as human salvation is concerned. The first Thesis states:

SLIDE • THESIS 1. “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent,” He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

The second follows right on.

SLIDE • THESIS 2. “This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.”

Later he writes, **(SLIDE • THESIS 20)** “Therefore the pope, when he uses the words ‘plenary remission of all penalties,’” does not actually mean “all penalties,” but only those imposed by himself.

SLIDE • THESIS 21. Thus those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences, sacraments of the church, or the purchase of indulgences.

SLIDE • THESIS 27. They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory.

SLIDE • THESIS 86. Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?"

You can understand why Luther made himself so unpopular with the church.

His teachings quickly spread throughout Germany, and soon reached Rome. Luther was tried by his church, more than once, and efforts were made to remove him. To kill him. When he appeared before an important church council in the city of Worms, the historical record states that Luther uttered these words.

SLIDES (2) • QUOTE. "I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand; I can do no other; may God help me. Amen." *D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation, book 7, chapter 8.*

And what was Luther's point there? I cannot submit my faith to a man, to a church leader, to a council. I will take my direction from the (**SLIDE • BIBLE**) Bible. The church of the time wasn't doing that. The church was selling indulgences, and not only selling them but giving people the chance to earn them in other ways. The church was dispensing forgiveness of sin. The church had taught people that there was a place called purgatory, a place where those who were not fit for heaven would go to so they could be purged by fire of those sins. The church taught that God would torture the lost in hell forever—that there would never be any respite from the agony caused by those flames. The church was teaching that people could pray to saints in addition to praying to God through Jesus.

Jesus said to a man one day, (**SLIDE • LUKE 5:20–21**) "Your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" They were upset that Jesus was forgiving sin. Of course, there was nothing wrong with that because Jesus, the Son of God, was God. One challenge many people have seen over the years is that the church of Luther's day claims to be able to forgive sin. Now, they'll tell you, "It's God who forgives the sin. We just dispense the sacrament."

Except that, for one thing, sacraments aren't Biblical and two, the Bible says, (**SLIDE • 1 TIMOTHY 2:5**) "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Keep in mind that purgatory is not Biblical. It's taught as though it's valid, but there is NO place where God sends those unfit for heaven to be purged by fire before they enter heaven. And think of what that would be? What would it be if you could somehow be fitted for heaven by having your sins burned away? That would be salvation by works. Salvation is a gift given us by God. We're cleansed from our sins by the blood of Jesus, not by the fires of a mythical purgatory. The idea of an (**SLIDE • FLAMES**) eternally burning hell is also not Biblical. What are you saying about God if you suggest that He would burn people forever and ever and ever, without mercy. I had to be honest with myself one day, because that's what I'd been taught. And it surely isn't a matter of what SEEMS right to us. But when you look into the Bible, you don't read that God will burn people forever and ever. We

believe it because we were taught it. That's the only reason. And there's something else the church of Luther's day did. You'll remember we looked at this.

SLIDE • QUOTE. "Which is the Sabbath day?"

"Saturday is the Sabbath day."

SLIDE • QUOTE. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?"

"Because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Sunday to Saturday." *The Convert's Catechism*, p. 50.

And this. **(SLIDES (2) • QUOTE)** "Fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the resurrection."

Now that's serious! A church can no more **(SLIDE • 10C)** change the law of God than you could change the law of gravity. So what you had over time was a move further and further away from Bible. For varying reasons. But people—and generally, church people are what you'd graciously call "good" people—people moved away from the Word of God. One tradition gives way to another. And behind it all, there's a power that is seeking to lead people away from the Bible, away from total dependence on Jesus Christ. It wasn't only Luther who spoke against the church. But the other Reformers. Not perfect people, but people who were trying to follow the light of the Bible. **(SLIDE • ZWINGLI)** Zwingli in northern Switzerland. Calvin in **(SLIDE • GENEVA)** Geneva, along with **(SLIDE • WALL)** William Farel.

SLIDE • KNOX. John Knox of Scotland. **(SLIDE • WESLEY)** John Wesley of England. **(SLIDE • TYNDALE)** William Tyndale the Bible translator. And so many more. Go all the way back to John Wycliffe, the **(SLIDE • CHURCH)** Bible translator from Lutterworth, England. They all agreed—and many others with them—that a system of Bible teaching that directed people away from Jesus as truly Lord and Savior was something that would cause great danger down in the close of time. In fact, the Reformers pointed to the book of Revelation and spoke to today.

Remember the prophetic sequence. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Rome divides into ten nations by 538AD, and THEN the Little Horn is revealed, the same power as the beast or nation in Revelation 13. Luther and the others were right. It's the Vatican or the Roman Catholic church who today claims to be able to dispense grace, who claims that they can change the law of God, who claims that forgiveness is found through priests, who claims that people pay for their sins in purgatory. It's not a matter of being bad people. It's the teaching that is leading people directly away from the claims of the gospel, away from faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

There's a spiritual enemy, and he's wanting to lead the world astray. And it's not always obvious at first look. There's a spiritual battle going on in this world.

But we know that **(SLIDE • CROSS)** Jesus died for you. You're of value. And it's through trusting in Him that you can know your sins are forgiven and that you have a new heart. On the cross long ago. On the cross at Calvary, heaven demonstrated to you that God would do anything He could to reach you and save you. Sin causes death, and **(SLIDE • JESUS)** Jesus said, "I'll take that. I'll drink that cup. I'll suffer that. So she can live forever. So he can have everlasting life." And no matter how bad it seems your life has become, God is there for you. The cross still witnesses to the great love of God. How could the Son of God choose to die for broken people, for sinful people? How could He do

that? Ah, but He did. He died for you, and for me. God is calling us to open up our hearts and look to the Lamb of God, to trust in the mercy of God. That's foreign to people who've never had a personal relationship with God. But God wants your heart, and He urges you to let Him move into your life, and bring hope, and bring direction for now and the future, and bring blessing, and bring purpose like never before.

Appeal story.

SLIDE • SECOND COMING.



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