

Truth Express

CURRENT AFFAIRS AND GEOPOLITICS THROUGH THE LENS OF FAITH

ISSUE 02

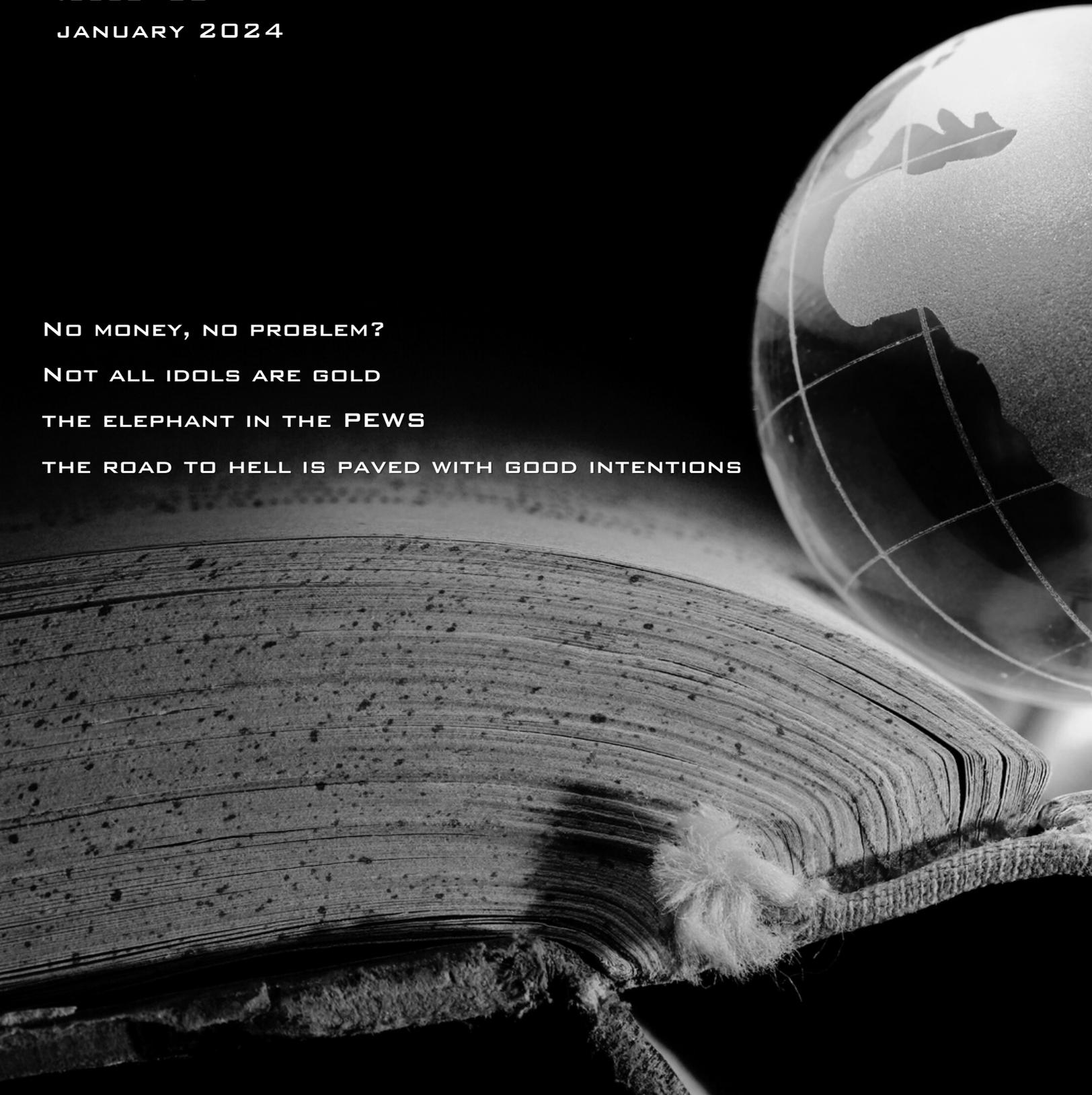
JANUARY 2024

NO MONEY, NO PROBLEM?

NOT ALL IDOLS ARE GOLD

THE ELEPHANT IN THE PEWS

THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS



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• I S S U E 2 •

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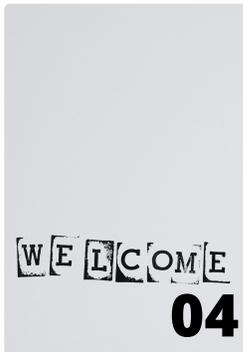
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WELCOME

Fellow TRUTH SEEKERS I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings as we embark on this exciting journey with the second issue of Truth Express Magazine. It brings me great pleasure to witness the continuation of our endeavor to explore the intricate tapestry of geopolitics, religion, and current affairs, all through the lens of truth and understanding.

Our inaugural issue was met with enthusiasm and appreciation, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who embraced our mission. Your support has been the driving force behind our commitment to provide insightful and thought-provoking content that delves deep into the complex issues that shape our world.

In a time when the global landscape is constantly evolving, our magazine strives to be a beacon of clarity amidst the chaos. We understand that the pursuit of truth is an ongoing endeavor, one that requires a vigilant and discerning eye. This second issue continues in that spirit, offering a diverse array of perspectives on geopolitics, religion, and other vital current affairs topics. Our team of dedicated writers and experts has worked tirelessly to present you with articles that are both informative and thought-provoking.

At Truth Express, we firmly believe that understanding the world around us is essential to making informed decisions and fostering a more peaceful and harmonious global community. By exploring the intersection of geopolitics and religion, we aim to shed light on the underlying forces that shape our society, challenge our preconceptions, and encourage meaningful dialogue.

As you delve into the pages of this magazine, I encourage you to approach each article with an open mind and a thirst for knowledge. Engage with the ideas, challenge them if necessary, and share your thoughts with us. Your feedback and insights are invaluable to us as we continue to grow and evolve.

Thank you for being a part of the Truth Express community. Together, we can strive for a world where truth and understanding prevail, and where the complexities of our global landscape are met with the wisdom and unity that it deserves.



RAY ST. MICHAEL WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT - INSTITUTE OF RELIGION (IOR)

NAVIGATING TRUTH'S VOYAGE

It is both an honor and a privilege to welcome you to the second issue of Truth Express. With the success of our inaugural issue, we embark on this new chapter with an unwavering commitment to deliver high-quality content that informs, enlightens, and challenges our perspectives on the geopolitical, religious, and current affairs landscape.

In a world characterized by a torrent of information, we believe that the pursuit of truth is akin to embarking on a voyage. It's a journey that demands patience, discernment, and a keen sense of direction. Our magazine, like a trusted compass, is here to guide you through the complex and ever-changing waters of global affairs.

Within these pages, you will find a rich tapestry of articles, essays, and analyses that explore the multifaceted aspects of our world. We've curated content that not only informs but also encourages you to engage in meaningful conversations and critical thinking. Whether you're interested in the geopolitics of regions afar, the nuances of religious belief systems, or the latest developments in current affairs, you'll find it all within these covers.

Our dedicated team of writers, researchers, and contributors have poured their expertise and passion into every word you'll read. They have diligently researched and crafted pieces that aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of the topics at hand. We invite you to immerse yourself in these narratives, to question assumptions, and to broaden your horizons.

But Truth Express is not just a monologue; it is a conversation. Your voice matters to us, and we encourage you to share your thoughts, feedback, and opinions with us. Together, we can create a community of readers and thinkers who are dedicated to uncovering the truths that shape our world.

In the spirit of truth-seeking and enlightenment, I invite you to join us on this journey. Let's continue to explore the uncharted waters of geopolitics, religion, and current affairs, all while striving for truth to flourish.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to the engaging and enlightening voyage that awaits us in these pages.

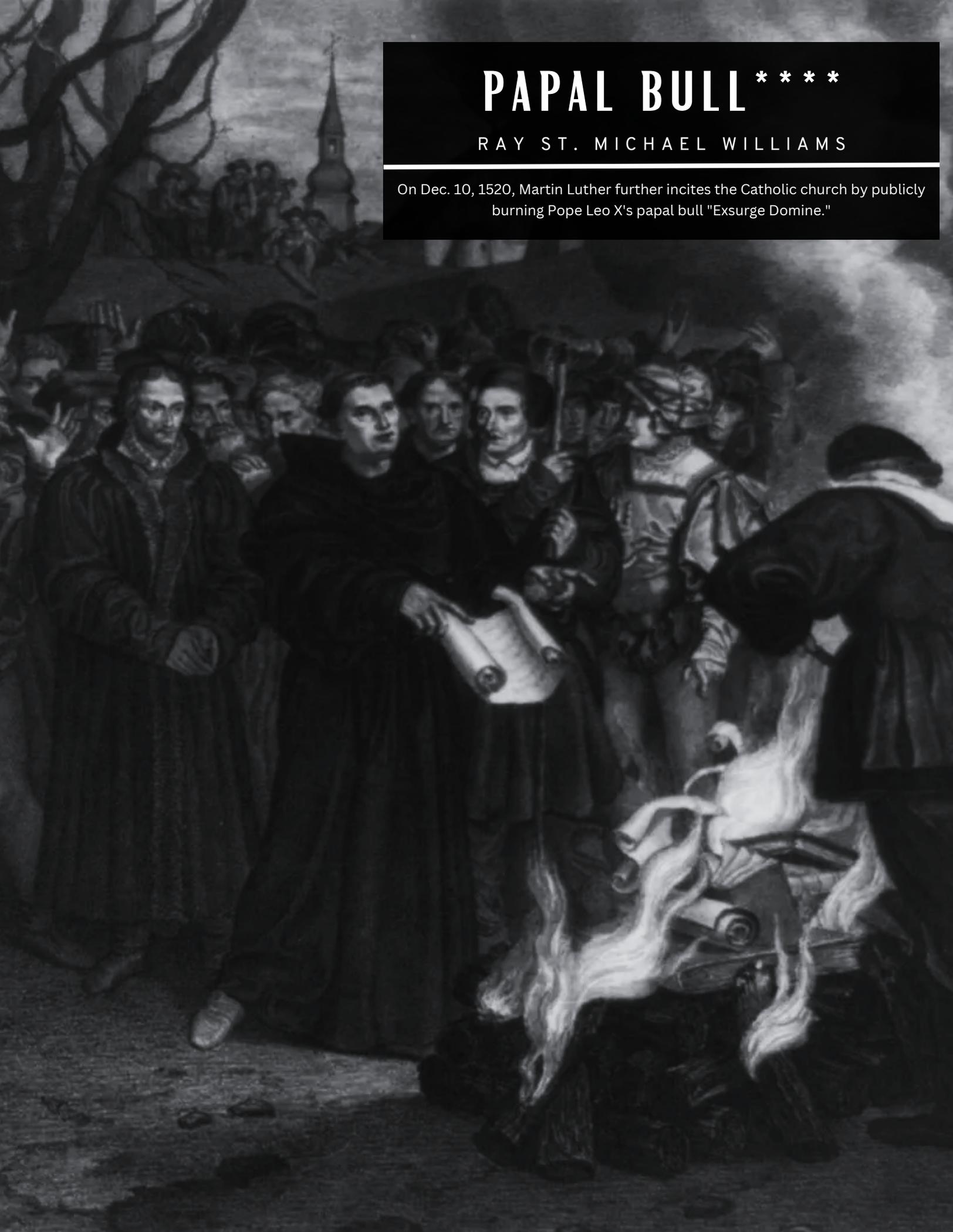


ROSAN MCKENZIE
VICE PRESIDENT | EDITOR

PAPAL BULL****

RAY ST. MICHAEL WILLIAMS

On Dec. 10, 1520, Martin Luther further incites the Catholic church by publicly burning Pope Leo X's papal bull "Exsurge Domine."



In our previous article, "EU-nification of the Beast," we explored the idea that the European Union is a progression of the Roman Empire and is associated with the first Beast of Revelation 13. We examined its historical ties to the Holy Roman Empire and its modern role in geopolitics.

What about the second beast of Revelation 13 the "lamb like" beast with two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon? In order to answer this question, we will delve deeper into the biblical perspective to shed light on the Papacy and its Papal Bulls which have played a crucial role in elevating the Roman Catholic Church to an independent power capable of challenging civil authorities.

This investigation will also identify the Papacy as the second beast of Revelation 13, the woman who rides the beast in Revelation 17, and the false prophet in Revelation 19. The justification for this identifications lies in the presence of the first beast from Revelation 13 and its consistent presence along with of a second entity, which we believe is the Papacy.

The second beast in Revelation 13 is described as having the following characteristics:

- I. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence.
- II. It makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast.
- III. It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men, deceiving those who dwell on earth.
- IV. It was allowed to give breath to an image of the first beast so that the image of the first beast should even speak.
- V. It cause those who would not worship the image of the first beast to be slain.
- VI. It causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

In Christendom it is generally accepted that the book of Revelations is a continuation from the book of Daniel. As previously outlined, the first beast is a political power and is the same as the fourth kingdom/beast described in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, the

Roman Empire. Therefore the second beast of Revelation 13 will not be political in nature like the previous beasts.

Some think the second beast is political, but if this were indeed the case, there would incorrectly be five Kingdoms from the time of Daniel before the Kingdom of God is established, instead of four which is specifically stated in Daniel. The second beast is like a kingdom exerting authority, but it is also able to perform signs and miracles and is able to deceive persons causing false worship. This seems highly religious in nature and a kingdom onto itself.

CAN WE IGNORE THAT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, AN ENCLAVE WITHIN ROME, ITALY, HAS ITS HEADQUARTERS THE VATICAN CITY (OFFICIALLY THE VATICAN CITY STATE), LISTED AS A LANDLOCKED INDEPENDENT COUNTRY OR MICROSTATE AND IS THE ONLY RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT TO DO SO?



The Roman Catholic Church via the Vatican City evolved into an independent state in 1929 with the Lateran Treaty, and it is a distinct territory under "full ownership, exclusive dominion, and sovereign authority and jurisdiction" of the Holy See, itself a sovereign entity under international law, which maintains the city state's temporal power and governance, diplomatic, and spiritual independence. This state (or beast for dramatic effect) is headed by, you guessed it, the man himself, The Pope or the Papacy.

Vatican City is the smallest independent state in the world both in terms of area and population. It is an independent city-state located entirely within the city of Rome, Italy. While it is recognized as a sovereign entity, it is not a member of the United Nations. The reason for Vatican City's non-membership in the UN is primarily due to its special nature as the spiritual and administrative center of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Holy See, which governs the Vatican City, maintains diplomatic relations with many countries around the world, but it has chosen not to become a full member of the UN. Some reasons for this include concerns about potentially compromising its religious and political independence, as well as its commitment to a policy of neutrality in international conflicts. Additionally, Vatican City is a very small country with limited resources and may not actively participate in international diplomacy to the extent that UN member states do.

THE VATICAN & THE HOLY SEE

While Vatican City itself is not a UN member, the Holy See, which is the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, enjoys a unique status at the United Nations. It is recognized as a "permanent observer state" in the UN General Assembly. Pope Paul VI established the first Holy See "permanent observer mission" on March 21, 1964.

This observer status allows the Holy See to participate in the work of the UN, attend its meetings, and engage in diplomatic efforts without being a full member. However, it does not have the same voting rights as member states. Observer states can participate in debates, offer insights, and provide input on various issues discussed within the UN, particularly those related to human rights, social justice, and other areas of shared interest.

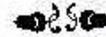
The Holy See's observer status at the UN reflects its significant global influence, especially in matters related to moral and ethical concerns, and its desire to engage with the international community while maintaining its distinct religious and diplomatic identity.

In Catholic Church terminology, a "see" is the seat of authority of a particular bishop, and the "Holy See" refers to the authority of the Bishop of Rome (the Pope).



CALENDARIUM GREGORIANVM PERPETVVM.

Orbi Christiano vniuerso à GREGORIO XIII. P. M. pro-
positum. ANNO M. D. LXXXII.



GREGORIVS EPISCOPVS SERVVS SERVORVM DEI AD PERPETVAM REI MEMORIAM.



*INTER gravissimas Pastoralis officij nostri curas, ea postrema non est, ut qua à sa-
cro Tridentino Concilio Sacre Apostolicae reservata fuer, illa ad finem optatum, Deo
adiutore producantur. Sane eiusdem Concilij Patres, cum ad reliquam cogitatio-
nem Breviaryi usque curam adiungerent, tempore tamen exclusi rem totam ex
ipsis Concilij decreto ad auctoritatem & iudicium Romani Pontificis reuulerunt.
Duo autem Breviario precipue continentur, quorum unum preces, laudesque diui-
nas festis, profectisque diebus per sollemnitas complectitur, alterum pertinet ad annuos*

P. M. D. LXXXII. ANNO M. D. LXXXII.

PAPAL BULL "INTER GRAVISSIMAS" – THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR (1582)

THE PAPAL BULLS: SHAPING A GEOPOLITICAL POWER

Throughout history the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church issues what are known as Papal Bulls which is a type of official decree or letter. They have been instrumental in consolidating the authority of the Papacy. These documents have been used for various purposes throughout history, including matters of doctrine, church administration, and other important issues. The term "bull" is derived from the Latin word "bulla," which means "seal," as these documents typically bear the Pope's seal.

Papal bulls are often highly formalized and solemn documents, and they carry significant authority within the Catholic Church. They can be used to define or clarify church teachings, establish or modify laws and regulations, make appointments or declarations, and address various matters of ecclesiastical or theological importance. Papal bulls are considered historical records and can provide insights into the history of the Catholic Church, its relationship with secular authorities, and its development of doctrine and practices over time and generally how it views itself. These documents have not only asserted spiritual dominion but have also extended the reach of the Church into the secular world. This process is eerily reminiscent of the

second beast described in Revelation 13, which exercises authority on behalf of the first beast, thereby playing a significant role in establishing a global power.

One of the most famous Papal Bulls, the "Papal Bull Unam Sanctam" issued by Pope Boniface VIII in 1302, claimed the Pope's supremacy over all temporal rulers, asserting that submission to the Papacy was essential for salvation. "Unam Sanctam," is often referred to as the "Papal Bull of the Two Swords". This assertion of spiritual and temporal power aligns with the characteristics of the second beast in Revelation 13, which appears as a lamb but speaks like a dragon, combining religious and political influence. This bull is significant in the context of the discussion about the Papacy's historical development as a geopolitical power from a biblical perspective.

In "Unam Sanctam," Pope Boniface VIII

asserted the supremacy of the Papacy over temporal (secular) authorities, emphasizing the spiritual authority of the Church over the earthly realm. The bull's title, "Unam Sanctam" or "One Holy," reflects this assertion of spiritual authority. It is considered one of the most extreme expressions of Papal power.

The bull stated that "both swords," referring to the spiritual and temporal authority, were given to the Pope by divine mandate. In essence, the Pope claimed the right to wield not only the spiritual sword, which pertained to religious matters, but also the temporal sword, which extended to the governance and rule of secular territories, which really means if necessary authority of military force.

From a biblical perspective, the "Two Swords" concept in "Unam Sanctam" can be seen as an attempt to consolidate power and authority, aligning with the idea of the second

beast in Revelation 13 exercising authority on behalf of the first beast.

This assertion of dual authority mirrors the blending of religious and political power that characterizes the Papal Bulls and the Papacy's historical role in geopolitics. Guarded by the Swiss Guard, shielded by NATO because it lies within Italy, a NATO member, who would dare attack this "country" in Rome without causing world war 3 ... 4 and 5?

In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued the "Inter Caetera" Papal Bull, which divided the New World between Spain and Portugal. The concept of the Church's right to seize property for the common good has its roots in various Papal Bulls and teachings over the centuries. This bull is just one example reflecting the concept of the Church's role in sanctioning actions deemed for the common good, including territorial claims. Take into consideration the Code of Canon Law from the Catholic Church, Canon 1254 "To pursue its proper purposes, the Catholic Church by innate right is able to acquire, retain, administer, and alienate temporal goods independently from civil power". What do we make of Canon - 1260 "The Church has an innate right to require from the Christian faithful those things which are necessary for the purposes proper to it"? We see a continuation of this type of thought up to 1965 where Pope Paul VI in the Gaudium Et Spes (section 71) states "Furthermore, it is the right of public authority to prevent anyone from abusing his private property to the detriment of the common good."

The title "Vicar of Christ" is one of the many titles attributed to the Pope over the centuries. In Catholic doctrine, It signifies the Pope's role as the earthly representative or substitute for Christ, particularly in his capacity as the head of the Church. The term "vicar" comes from the Latin "vicarius," which means "substitute" or "representative." Erroneously, the Catholics believe the Pope has inherited the authority and responsibilities of Peter, including the role of representing Christ on Earth. The title "Vicar of Christ" is actually rooted in the understanding of the Pope's role as the successor of Saint Peter, whom Catholics believe was appointed by Jesus as the leader of the Church (see Matthew 16:18-19).

In 1870, Pope Pius IX issued the "Pastor Aeternus" Papal Bull during the First Vatican Council, defining Papal Infallibility. This bull, issued by Pope Pius IX,

declared that when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra" (from the chair of Peter) on matters of faith and morals, he is infallible and his teachings are considered binding for all Catholics and by extension the entirety of Christendom. This doctrine solidified the Pope's authority in the eyes of the Catholic Church and gave the Pope authority in matters of faith and morals, a significant development in the Church's history. Apparently anything the Pope loosens on earth is also loosened in heaven, God forbid if the Pope decrees nothing morally wrong with an LGBTQ+ lifestyle.



POPE FRANCIS IS THE HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE BISHOP OF ROME AND SOVEREIGN OF THE VATICAN CITY STATE SINCE MARCH 13, 2013.

*

*

IN DECEMBER 2023, POPE FRANCIS FORMALLY APPROVED LETTING CATHOLIC PRIESTS BLESS SAME-SEX COUPLES WHILST MAINTAINING A BAN ON GAY MARRIAGE. -SOURCE: GETTYIMAGES

THE WOMAN WHO RIDES THE BEAST: REVELATION 17

In Revelation 17, we encounter the enigmatic imagery of a woman riding a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns. This woman is identified as the "great prostitute," and her connection to the Papacy has long been a subject of debate.

The Vatican's status as a sovereign state within the city of Rome, alongside its influence in global affairs, makes it a compelling candidate for this role. Moreover, the woman's association with the beast mirrors the historical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and European rulers. Throughout history, the Church has exercised significant influence over the political affairs of nations, aligning with the image of the woman guiding the beast.

The woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication represents a false religious power who could potentially spawn other religious harlots of whom she is the mother.

The protestant reformation lead by Martin Luther in the 1500's was good, but one wonders how many erroneous doctrines were absorbed into these new denominations that broke away from the authority of the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church. Seriously, how many errors were reversed with the formation of the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist Church to name a few examples? Was assembling on Sunday for worship reverted to the Sabbath (Friday evening to Saturday evening) as the bible commands in Exodus 20:8-11 and Leviticus 23:3-4 or did the error of Sunday worship continue?

THE FALSE PROPHET: REVELATION 17

In Revelation 19, we encounter the false prophet who performs miraculous signs and leads people astray. The beast consistently present in Revelation 13 and 17 (each time with a second entity), once again appears with a second entity, the false prophet. The connection between the Papacy and this false prophet is evident in the history of the Church.

IN AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD, UNDERSTANDING THESE CONNECTIONS PROVIDES VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO THE COMPLEX TAPESTRY OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS.

Claims of miracles and divine authority have been used to maintain control over the faithful. The Papal Bulls, often accompanied by claims of divine approval, further solidify this identification. The story doesn't end, there are as more miracles to come that will be so significant that they may even deceive the elect.

THE CLAY IN DANIEL'S STATUE: A UNIQUE POWER

In Daniel's vision of the statue representing different kingdoms, the feet are made of a mixture of iron and clay, symbolizing a divided kingdom. The Vatican's unique position as a sovereign entity within Rome, distinct from the metallic kingdoms of history, aligns with this biblical imagery. All the political kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's Statue from Daniel 2 were metallic and we have the introduction of a new type of material non-metallic in clay. Could the clay represent the Vatican's influence extending from the Roman Empire, making the Roman Empire a "different kingdom" in the geopolitical landscape.

As we examine the historical significance of Papal Bulls and the role of the Papacy in geopolitics through a biblical perspective, we find compelling evidence to identify the Papacy as the second beast of Revelation 13, the woman who rides the beast in Revelation 17, and the false prophet in Revelation 19.

The Vatican's unique status and its historical interactions with secular authorities align with these biblical descriptions, emphasizing the intertwined relationship between religion and geopolitics. In an ever-changing world, understanding these connections provides valuable insights into the complex tapestry of world wide affairs.

JERUSALEM

Source: GettyImages

I rejoiced when they kept on asking me,
“Let us go to the Lord’s Temple.”
Our feet are standing
inside your gates, Jerusalem.
Jerusalem stands built up,
a city knitted together.
To it the tribes ascend—
the tribes of the Lord—
as decreed to Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

-Psalm 122:1



OH JERUSALEM

E L D E R S T E P H E N S C A L E

Street of gold. Crystal sea. Gates of pearl. Accentuated with bright light. This is the pristine vision John saw with the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven like a bride beautifully adorned for her husband.

This is in stark contrast to what is happening in Jerusalem today. Ruled by a fragile government, plagued with civil unrest, sullied by contention over human rights. Protests, violence, missiles being periodically launched from one side to the other. Wars and rumours of wars, is nothing new to Jerusalem. It is a city with a long history of conflicts and tensions. According to Eric H. Cline, the city has been “destroyed at least twice, besieged 23 times, attacked an additional 52 times, and captured and recaptured 44 times” (as quoted in “Do We Divide the Holiest Holy City?” Moment, March/April 2008). Ironically the name Jerusalem means city of peace.

Its first mentioned is in the Scriptures in Genesis 14, when the king of Salem, a priest of the most High, Melchizedek, meets Abram after his victorious battle against the Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five (Genesis 14:9)

In 1000 B.C., King David conquered Jerusalem and made it the capital of the Jewish kingdom. His son, Solomon, built the first holy Temple about 40 years later. The Babylonians occupied Jerusalem in 586 B.C., destroyed the Temple, and sent the Jews into exile. About 50 years after that, the Persian King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Alexander the Great took control of Jerusalem in 332 B.C. Over the next several hundred years, the city was conquered and ruled by different groups, including the Romans, Persians, Arabs, Fatimids, Seljuk Turks, Crusaders, Egyptians, Mamelukes and Islamists.

Today, Jerusalem consists of the modern, western section, built up after the institution of the state of Israel in 1948 CE, and the medieval section, known as the Old City, which is surrounded by walls and gates built during the reign of Suleiman I (1494-1566 CE) when the province was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Old City is divided into four quarters: the Jewish Quarter; the Christian Quarter; the Muslim Quarter; and the Armenian Quarter.

The total population reached a grand total of 966,200. In 2021, Jerusalem had 590,600 Jewish residents; 375,600 Arab residents (362,600 were Muslim and 12,900 Christian); 3,500 non-Arab Christian residents; and a further 10,500 residents who opted for no classification.



THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. ACCORDING TO TRADITIONS DATING BACK TO THE 4TH CENTURY, IT CONTAINS THE SITE WHERE JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED AT A PLACE KNOWN AS CALVARY OR GOLGOTHA, AND JESUS'S EMPTY TOMB. SOURCE: GETTYIMAGES



THE WESTERN WALL/WAILING WALL. IT IS THE LAST REMAINING OUTER WALL OF THE ANCIENT JEWISH TEMPLE. -SOURCE: GETTYIMAGES



THE DOME OF THE ROCK. IT IS REVERED BY MOST MUSLIMS AS THE SPOT FROM WHICH THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ASCENDED TO HEAVEN. - SOURCE: GETTYIMAGES



Jerusalem is of utmost importance when it comes to bible prophecy.

Daniel spoke of the resumption of daily sacrifices and the emergence of the "little horn" that will take away those daily sacrifices and setup the abomination that causes desolation (Daniel 7:8, 11, 21-22; 8:9-10). In chapter 11, Daniel also goes into great detail about a conflict between the king of the north and the king of the south, for which Jerusalem, the glorious land, will be in the center of the conflict. Jesus Christ, also highlights Jerusalem, when asked about the time of end, referencing the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the house top not come down to take anything out of his house: (Matthew 24:15-17)

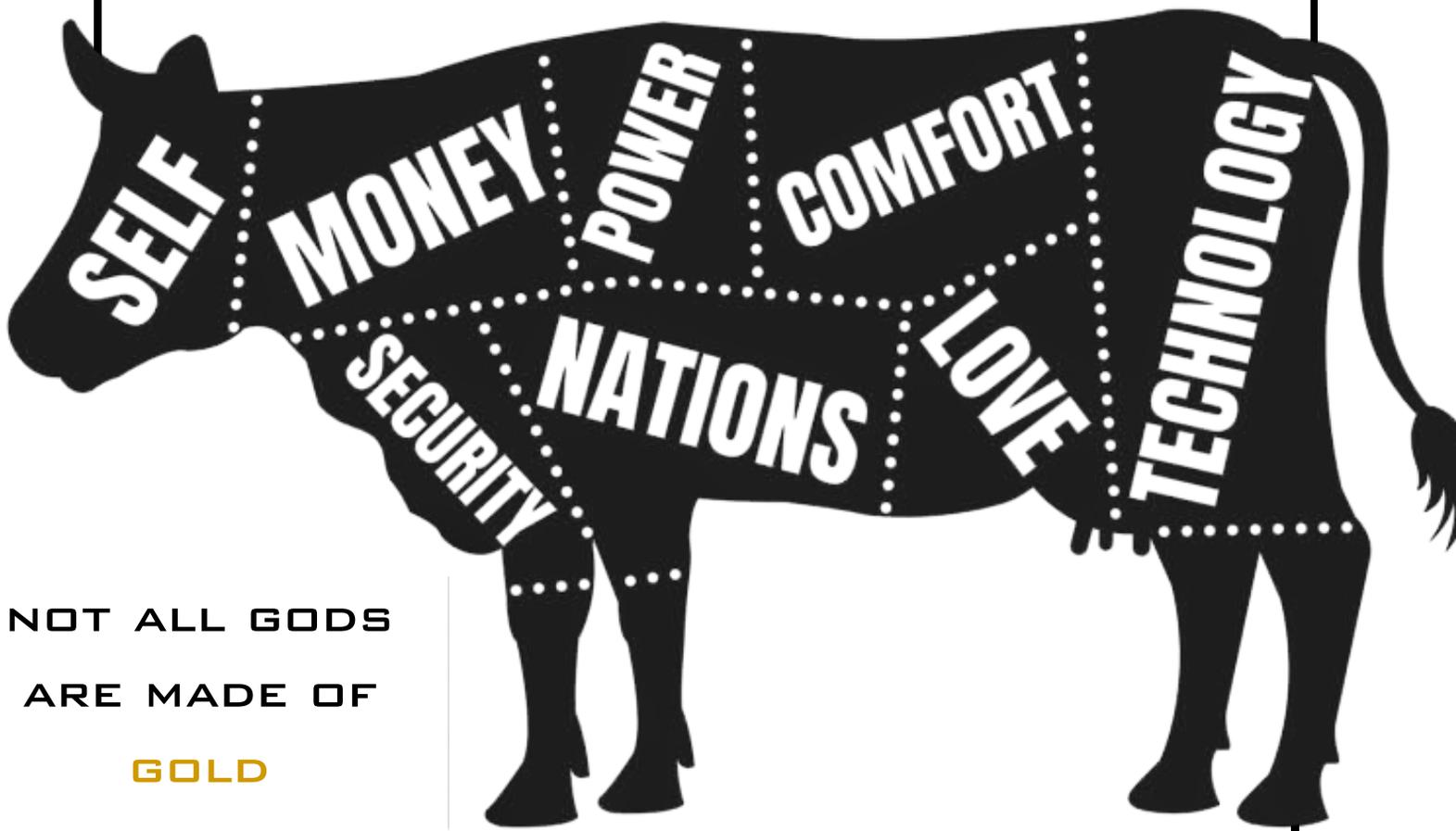
Zechariah prophesied that Jerusalem will be a cup of trembling, that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling" (chapter 12:2). In other words, the surrounding nations will be drunken with hatred, and jealousy, over Jerusalem. They will feel compelled to war against the city. However, the Lord said "I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves". Zechariah goes on to speak of a great battle where many nations shall gather against the city of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2) . Then Jesus himself shall return and defend the city. His feet will stand on the mount of Olives (verse 4). Living waters shall flow from the city (verse 8). All those people of the nations who fought against Jerusalem that remain, shall go up from year to year to observe the Feast of Tabernacles (verse 16 - 17).

Once Jesus returns and reigns from Jerusalem, for 1000 years (Revelation 20:4-6) it will be the capital of his kingdom. Isaiah saw this vision concerning Jerusalem, in the second chapter, that the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established, and many peoples will come to it saying teach me the ways of the Lord, as the law will go out from Zion. He (The Lord) will judge between nations and settle disputes for many peoples. Micah had a similar vision in chapter 4.

At the end of the 1000 years when Satan is released, he shall again bring the nations to war against the camp of the saints, the beloved city, Jerusalem (Revelation 20:7-9). However fire shall come down from heaven and devour those who march against God's people and His city.

Thereafter, the city of Jerusalem, which has seen so many conflicts, wars, destruction and reconstructions, shall have its ultimate renewal, when the old city shall be destroyed with fire, and the new city shall come down out of heaven. There will be no more suffering, no more pain. God the Father shall dwell therein, with his people, and the city will finally live up to its name, the city of peace.

THE EVOLUTION



NOT ALL GODS
ARE MADE OF
GOLD

OF **IDOLATRY**

JANIELLE GOLDBURN



SOURCE - NUVOLANEVICATA | SHUTTERSTOCK

THERE IS AN
ALTAR IN THE
CENTER OF THE
HUMAN HEART.

*

THE HUMAN
HEART CANNOT
BEAR FOR THAT
ALTAR TO BE
EMPTY.

*

IF THE LIVING
GOD IS NOT ON
THE ALTAR,
ACKNOWLEDGED,
WORSHIPED,
LOVED AND
OBEYED, SOME
OTHER GOD, A
FALSE GOD,
SOME DEAD IDOL
WILL BE PLACED
ON THE ALTAR.

~R McTEIGUE

The first commandment that God gave to the children of Israel in Exodus 20 was “You shall have no other gods before me.” Throughout the Bible we encounter numerous scripture of God warning the children of Israel to not follow the nations around them in worshiping other gods and graven images. But is this still relevant for us today?

The Collins Dictionary defines idolatry as “worship of idols or excessive devotion to or reverence for some person or thing”. The first mention of an idol in the Bible is found in Genesis 31:19, when Rachel had stolen the household gods from her father Laban. It is also evident that the children of Israel had adopted idol worship while they were in bondage in Egypt (Joshua 24:14, Ezekiel 20:7) and this was evident by their suggestion, creation and bowing down to the Golden calf as mentioned in Exodus 32. Despite being commanded by God to not worship idols, Israel often failed to obey. Could the same fate befall the followers of God today? Are we guilty of breaking the 1st commandment today? The best way to identify if you are guilty of committing idolatry is by identifying idols in your life.

In today’s society, especially in the western world that is dominated by the Christian and Muslim faiths, idols are not typically found in the form of graven images and statues.

They have evolved from figurines and statues use less noticeable forms that could not be identified without careful introspection and life analysis. Idols today have taken the form of impalpable objects such as our careers, jobs and palpable objects such as our spouses, houses, cars, children, money, entertainment, technology, etc. One of the most common idols that we can see today is that of ourselves. In this era of selfies, we are seeing more and more persons who are obsessed with themselves to the point in which our society has now been thrusting into a whirlpool of confusion. Definitions and basic science have now been questioned and changed all due to the rise of egocentricity and narcissism.

But how can we identify the work of these idols in our lives?

Firstly, we need to pray. We must first seek God’s assistance to help reveal to us the idols in our lives. As illustrated in the definition of idolatry and idol is anything we give excessive devotion or reverence to, which takes us to our next step. Secondly, we need to do a serious introspection, analyze our lives. For one week or even a month, take a strict record of how you spend your time. Place them in categories such as God (time spent in prayer, meditation, bible studies, bible discussions), Entertainment (includes usage of social media

watching TV, video games, surfing the net, etc), Career (time spent at work, educational studies), Relationships (time spent physical and thinking about your spouse, children, parents, friends, etc), Possessions (money, house, car, clothes, jewelry, etc) and Self (appearance, reputation).

Some of these categories may overlap. Next, for each item, rate them in term of their level of importance in your life and write about how you would feel if you were to lose them. Next ask yourself the following question about each item on your list:

1. DOES IT GIVE ME GREATER JOY THAN GOD.
2. DOES IT MAKE ME EXCITED ABOUT MY FUTURE
3. DO I TALK ABOUT IT ALOT?
4. DO I THINK ABOUT IT ALOT?
5. DO I FEAR LOSING IT ?
6. DO I DREAM ABOUT IT OFTEN?
7. DO I ENJOY SPENDING TIME ON IT?

THEREFORE YOU ARE TO TELL ISRAEL'S HOUSE, 'THIS IS WHAT THE LORD GOD SAYS, "TURN AWAY! TURN AWAY FROM YOUR IDOLS, AND ABANDON YOUR DETESTABLE PRACTICES! FOR WHEN A NATIVE ISRAELI OR A RESIDENT ALIEN ABANDONS ME TO SET UP IDOLS IN HIS HEART BEHIND MY BACK, AND THEN PLACES THE STUMBLING BLOCK OF HIS INIQUITY RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIS OWN FACE, THEN APPROACHES A PROPHET TO INQUIRE OF ME ON BEHALF OF HIS OWN SELF-INTEREST, I, THE LORD WILL ANSWER HIM MYSELF. I'M DETERMINED TO OPPOSE THAT PERSON AND MAKE HIM AN EXAMPLE. PROVERBS WILL BE WRITTEN ABOUT HIM WHEN I ELIMINATE HIM FROM MY PEOPLE. THEN YOU'LL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD.'"

E Z E K I E L 1 4 : 6 - 8

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

E X O D U S 2 0 : 3

From answering these questions you will be able to clearly identify what the idols are in your life. If you identify any idols, seek forgiveness from God and repent. Additionally, you can do a fast petition God to help you in getting rid of your idols especially if it involves self idolatry.

In 1 Corinthians 10:14 Paul urges us to "flee idolatry" and in 1 John 5:21, John says "Little children, keep yourself from idols" additionally, in Acts 17: 29-31, Paul speaks about idolatry when he states "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed."

Yes, we know that these things are not God but by giving more time and devotion than God we are putting them about Him, thus breaking the 1st commandment.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 states that the duty of man is to "Fear God, and keep his commandments..." As believers, we are a part of a covenant with God that involves obedience. Keeping God's commandments are paramount to attaining the rewards promised to His followers. Thus we must take our journey to the kingdom seriously.

With constantly staying connected to God-through prayer, bible study, fasting, continuous introspection, forthwith confession and repentance and obedience to His words, one can be confident in making their calling and election sure.

DEAR CHILDREN, KEEP AWAY FROM IDOLS

1 J O H N 5 : 2 1

THE ELEPHANT IN THE PEWS

R O S A N M C K E N Z I E



SOURCE: BLOOMSBURY CENTRAL

SO GOD CREATED MANKIND IN HIS OWN IMAGE; IN HIS OWN IMAGE GOD
CREATED THEM; HE CREATED THEM MALE AND FEMALE.
GENESIS 1:27

As the winds of change sweep through the church, echoes of the Protestant Reformation are heard, reminding us of a time when Martin Luther's 95 theses reshaped the religious landscape. However, today, we witness the emergence of a different kind of reformation which, unlike its historical predecessor, is a reformation the church could do without. While Luther may have fought for theological truths, this reformation appears to challenge timeless values, creating a discordant note in the symphony of faith; consistently trading on a common-sense observation about the world that is central to human flourishing: Human beings are gendered creatures.

Throughout the history of the Christian church, no theological authority, council, or denominational statement ever suggested that homosexual conduct was morally acceptable. However, there is now a concerning trend as congregations are increasingly adopting "gay-friendly" positions.

The Reformation Project (TRP) is part of a larger movement organizing conferences nationwide with primary goal is to equip LGBT Christians and their supporters with the tools to reinterpret church teachings on sexual orientation and gender identity using the Bible. TRP adheres to standard Evangelical beliefs, affirming the Bible's inspiration, Jesus' sacrifice for sins, His resurrection, and the Holy Spirit's transformative power.

During their conferences, TRP addresses various scriptures and common challenges to a more LGBTQ-inclusive perspective. They provide instruction in hermeneutics and theology, along with strategic and persuasive communication techniques. Be prepared, as this movement is organized, determined, and growing.

Revisionist gay theology (revision of theology to embrace same-sex relationships) meets every Bible verse referring to homosexuality head on, and attempts to explain why each verse is



MATTHEW VINES - FOUNDER OF THE REFORMATION PROJECT AND
AUTHOR OF GOD AND THE GAY CHRISTIAN: THE BIBLICAL CASE IN
SUPPORT OF SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS 2014.

SOURCE: THE REFORMATIONPROJECT.ORG

misunderstood today. Nonetheless, even in the face of these arguments, the clear and straightforward truth of Scripture remains unchanged and evident. This revisionist attempt should not surprise us, however. In Paul's final missive to the church he warned his own disciple, Timothy, that **"the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myth"**. (2 Timothy. 4:3-4)

But what does the Bible actually have to say about this? We will review and offer a response to their main talking points as displayed on The Reformation Project website as a biblical case for the inclusion of LGBTQ in churches.

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Experience shouldn't cause us to dismiss Scripture, but it can cause us to reconsider our interpretation of scripture.

TRP's Biblical Case Point #1 argues that while personal experiences shouldn't lead us to disregard Scripture, they can prompt us to reevaluate how we interpret it. TRP cites examples like the inclusion of Gentiles in the church and the abolition of slavery to illustrate how the church has historically revised its interpretations when evidence showed they didn't align with Jesus's teachings, particularly the idea that good trees bear good fruit. (Matthew 7)

The "experience" TRP refers to here pertains to the harm caused by interpretations of the Bible that prohibit all homosexual behavior. This harm includes family conflicts, rejection, guilt, shame, depression, drug use, and even suicide among LGBT individuals. TRP considers these consequences as "bad fruit," suggesting that they should compel us to reconsider our interpretation of Scripture.

By TRP's criteria, any unpleasantness or difficulty, even those arising from following Jesus's teachings, could be seen as "bad fruit." On the contrary, Jesus himself taught that following him might lead to persecution, tribulation, family division, and death, but he also regarded these as blessings. (Matthew 5:10-12). Most importantly, TRP has misinterpreted Jesus's teachings. The passage doesn't support TRP's stance but actually condemns it. They do not cite the scripture in question. However, but a proper reading of the scriptures show that whole point of Jesus' lesson is the warning He begins with: "Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves". He says we will know to differentiate them by their fruit...Because every good tree [good teacher doing the will of the Father] bears good fruit, but the bad tree [false teacher practicing lawlessness] bears bad fruit." Jesus' teaching here is not ambiguous, veiled, or complex.

There is no suggestion anywhere in this passage that "bad fruit" is the kind of harm or distress described by TRP. "Fruit" for Jesus is not the consequence of a teaching (turmoil, anguish, hardship), but the conduct promoted by the teacher. Now, who in our midst is teaching Christians to practice lawlessness, those encouraging sexual restraint or those championing homosexual indulgence?

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Sexual orientation is a new concept—one the Christian tradition has not addressed

The argument put forth by TRP is that the biblical authors were unaware of the concept of sexual orientation as we understand it today, and they didn't grasp same-sex attraction in the context of committed, monogamous relationships between equals. Therefore, TRP contends that the biblical comments on homosexuality are not applicable to modern understanding. This is known as the "cultural distance argument," which posits that ancient same-sex behavior was exploitative, abusive, and oppressive, unlike the caring, committed, covenantal unions advocated by contemporary gay Christians.

To support their stance, TRP references two 1st-century sources, Musonius Rufus and Dio Chrysostom, who describe individuals engaging in same-sex encounters driven by excessive sensual desires rather than genuine, loving relationships. TRP argues that it was this extreme behavior that the biblical authors condemned, not homosexuality itself.

While examples of exploitative sexuality exist, so do instances of non-abusive homosexual practices, including loving variations seen today (except for "gay Christians"). Some references even hint at early notions of what we now call "sexual orientation." However, why one should assume that biblical texts only prohibit the abusive forms and not homosexual conduct itself.

Additionally, Scripture never makes a distinction between these two kinds of homosexuality. There is no indication in any biblical passage that the condemnation of homosexuality is exclusively based on coercive or oppressive same-sex activity. Instead, the Bible consistently conveys a different message, one that is emphasized in every relevant passage. To fully grasp this point, however, it is necessary to revisit the foundational aspects of the argument.

This is flawed and biased. Connecting the observations of Rufus and Chrysostom to the intentions of biblical authors like Paul or the principles in the Mosaic Law is unfounded. All biblical evidence consistently condemns homosexual behavior in absolute terms, without exceptions. This indicates a blanket prohibition of all forms of sensual behavior outside of a heterosexual, married union.

“

Celibacy is a gift and not a mandate

What, then, are Christians with same-sex attraction to do to remain godly? Is celibacy their only option—a lifetime of denying their pressing sexual desires?

TRP argues that celibacy is a gift and not a mandate, drawing on passages from the Bible where Jesus and Paul discuss celibacy as a gift from God. Celibacy is a gift, not a mandate. Jesus says celibacy can only be accepted by those to whom it is given (Matthew 19:11–12). They emphasize that not everyone is called to celibacy and that it should not be imposed on those who do not have the "gift." Therefore, TRP contends that there must be a legitimate alternative for gay Christians that doesn't involve forced celibacy.

There is an essential distinction between sexual purity and celibacy. Sexual purity is a command for all believers, both married and unmarried, and it involves abstaining from all forms of sexual immorality. Celibacy, on the other hand, is a more profound commitment, involving a life dedicated entirely to God's service, unencumbered by the demands of marriage and family. Celibacy entails sexual abstinence since marriage is the only place sexual desires may be satisfied, but it is more than mere abstinence.

The requirement of purity applies to all Christians, regardless of their gifting or circumstances. While some may have the gift of celibacy and can navigate unsatisfied sexual desires without distraction, others may find themselves in a celibate state due to circumstance. However, the moral standard of sexual purity remains consistent for all Christians, including those with same-sex attraction.

“

The Bible does not teach a normative doctrine of gender complementarity

TRP asserts that Scripture does not explicitly support the idea that males were designed by God as the appropriate complement to females (normative doctrine of gender complementarity). Instead, they argue that Genesis 2 emphasizes the similarity between males and females compared to other created animals, highlighting a kinship tie rather than physical complementarity. TRP argues that the "one-flesh" union in Genesis 2:24 is about this kinship, allowing same-sex unions based on kinship as members of the same species.

While Eve was a suitable helper for Adam because she was human, fulfilling the command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) requires both male and female genders, not just kinship. Reproduction is the only human bodily function necessitating union with the opposite sex to fulfill its purpose. The one-flesh union described in Genesis 2:24 is specifically between a husband and wife, not merely between kin. It is the only union capable of fulfilling the creation mandate to multiply. The absence of any instance in Scripture describing a one-flesh union between same-sex couples is extremely obvious.

Jesus answered a question about divorce by referring back to God's original intent for marriage: a union between one man and one woman, becoming one flesh for one lifetime. Contrary to some common claims then, Jesus did address the issue of homosexuality. His belief was that from the very beginning, God had designed, intended, and endorsed marriage and sexual relationships exclusively for long-term, monogamous, heterosexual unions. Of note, the six sexual activities prohibited in the Bible—adultery, fornication, rape, incest, bestiality, and homosexuality—all share a common characteristic: they involve sexual activity outside the confines of a husband-wife relationship.

Finally, Ephesians 5:22–32 reinforces the idea of gender complementarity in marriage, where the union of Christ and the church is compared to a heterosexual, man-woman, husband-wife marriage - each "part" belonging to the other but neither interchangeable- emphasizing the importance of gender differences.

“

The New Testament points toward greater inclusion of gender and sexual minorities, including those who do not fit neatly within binary categories

TRP argues that the acceptance of eunuchs in the Christian community in the New Testament, such as the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, serves as evidence for the inclusion of sexual "others," including homosexuals, in today's context. They point out that eunuchs, who were sexually different, were barred from God's assembly under the Mosaic Law but seemed to be fully accepted in the Christian community under the New Covenant.

This is a stretch to characterize this as a "greater inclusion of gender and sexual minorities." The acceptance of the Ethiopian eunuch was not indicative

of God's stance on "sexual minorities" but rather a response to a gentile genuinely seeking God based on the limited understanding he had. The encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch does not imply God's interest in expanding sexual diversity within the church.

God's grace is available to all who trust in Him. However, grace does not condone or celebrate sinful behavior, including homosexuality. Even after condemning homosexuality and other sexual sin, Paul writes, "Such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians. 6:11). This is the lesson to be learnt from the Ethiopian eunuch, forgiveness and transformation rather than the celebration of sexual diversity.

“

Sodom and Gomorrah addresses gang rape, not a loving relationship.

TRP's viewpoint is that homosexuality itself wasn't the issue in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; instead, it was sexual violence and social injustice that led to their downfall. Perhaps that is the case as a multiplicity of factors could have caused this. However, the crucial question is whether the biblical record indicates that homosexuality was a factor in the destruction of these cities.

Firstly, note that there was an expressed intention of sexual assault in Sodom, but it was never carried out. Therefore, if TRP is correct, it would imply that God annihilated these cities in part because a group of individuals had intentions to commit sexual assault without actually doing so.

Secondly, Jude 1:7 is cited as stating that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah indulged in "gross immorality" and pursued "strange flesh." While it is acknowledged that sex with angels would be considered strange, there is no indication that the men of Sodom knew the visitors were angels. The "strange flesh" aspect is also noted in other cities, making the interpretation involving other angels unlikely.

Finally, the events at Lot's house, including the attempted gang rape, could not have been the reason for God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is because God had already decided to destroy the cities before these incidents occurred. It is suggested that something terrible and ongoing had provoked

God's judgment long before the angels arrived, serving as an example of Divine wrath against godless behavior.

2 Peter 2:7 and Jude 1:7 explain this behavior as ongoing sensuous conduct driven by corrupt desires, with men pursuing flesh that was considered odd or strange, fitting the description of homosexuality.

The references to strange flesh, corrupt sensuality, actions contrary to right principle, and a pursuit of fleshly appetites in an improper way signals an abandonment of God's intended purpose for sex. In this, they despised His authority by exchanging the proper for the perverse, triggering the most severe judgment anywhere in biblical history outside of the flood. This departure from God's original order is the primary reason for God's severe judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah.

The revisionists interject stating that Ezekiel never mentions homosexuality. Correct, he doesn't use that word. He uses another. Ezekiel says "they committed abominations before me," (Ezekiel 16:50), the very word used of homosexuality.

“

The prohibitions of Leviticus do not apply to Christians.... The New Testament teaches that Christ's death and resurrection fulfilled the Law...which is why it's many rules or regulations have never applied to Christians.”

Firstly, does the idea that "Christ is the end of the Law" liberate individuals from all moral constraints? The more central question is whether the Mosaic prohibitions of same-sex behavior were specific to the Israelites in the theocracy or if they reflected universal moral concerns applicable to everyone.

“YOU SHALL NOT HAVE INTERCOURSE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE, TO BE DEFILED WITH HER. YOU SHALL NOT GIVE ANY OF YOUR OFFSPRING TO OFFER THEM TO MOLECH.... YOU SHALL NOT LIE WITH A MALE AS ONE LIES WITH A FEMALE; IT IS AN ABOMINATION. ALSO YOU SHALL NOT HAVE INTERCOURSE WITH ANY ANIMAL TO BE DEFILED WITH IT...IT IS A PERVERSION”.
LEVITICUS 18:20-23

“IF THERE IS A MAN WHO LIES WITH A MALE AS THOSE WHO LIE WITH A WOMAN, BOTH OF THEM HAVE COMMITTED A DETESTABLE ACT; THEY SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH”. **LEVITICUS 20:13**

The "abomination" of homosexuality in Leviticus 18 is mentioned alongside condemnation of adultery, child sacrifice, and bestiality and the Canaanites, who were gentiles, not "under the Law", faced judgment for engaging in these wicked practices, indicating that their status as gentiles did not excuse their behavior. Again the prohibition of homosexual behavior in the Mosaic law is unqualified, without exceptions for loving, consensual, committed relationships. Both participants are punished in this context, which distinguishes it from situations of rape, where only the abuser is penalized suggesting that the prohibition goes beyond merely coercive or abusive sex.

The main takeaway here is the idea that when a man engages in sexual activity with another man in a manner that should be reserved for a woman, it disrupts the natural order and rejects the intended purpose of sex. Again this distortion and corruption of God's original purpose for sex is as a "detestable act."

“**The same-sex behavior Paul condemns is characterized by lustfulness, disrespect, and selfishness, not love and commitment.**”

FOR SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD [GOD'S] INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES—HIS ETERNAL POWER AND DIVINE NATURE—HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN MADE, SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE. FOR EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, THEY DID NOT HONOR HIM AS GOD OR GIVE THANKS, BUT THEY BECAME FUTILE IN THEIR SPECULATIONS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED. PROFESSING TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS, AND EXCHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD FOR AN IMAGE IN THE FORM OF CORRUPTIBLE MAN AND OF BIRDS AND FOUR-FOOTED ANIMALS AND CRAWLING CREATURES.

THEREFORE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS TO IMPURITY, SO THAT THEIR BODIES WOULD BE DISHONORED AMONG THEM. FOR THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, AND WORSHIPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOREVER. AMEN

“FOR THIS REASON GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO DEGRADING PASSIONS; FOR THEIR WOMEN EXCHANGED THE NATURAL FUNCTION FOR THAT WHICH IS UNNATURAL, AND IN THE SAME WAY ALSO THE MEN ABANDONED THE NATURAL FUNCTION OF THE WOMAN AND BURNED IN THEIR DESIRE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, MEN WITH MEN COMMITTING INDECENT ACTS AND RECEIVING IN THEIR OWN PERSONS THE DUE PENALTY OF THEIR ERROR. AND JUST AS THEY DID NOT SEE FIT TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD ANY LONGER, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A DEPRAVED MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT PROPER”.

ROMANS. 1:20-28.

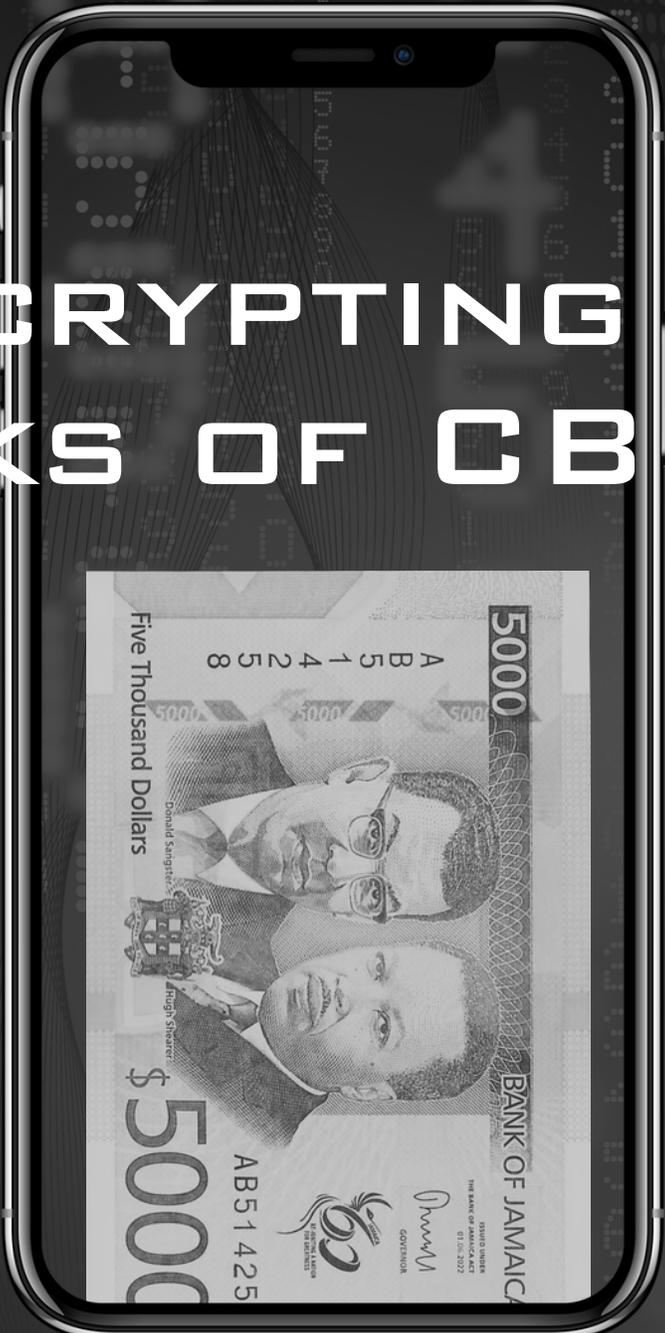
Romans 1 uses the Greek word "kreesis," translated as "function". According to the standard Greek language lexicon, it refers to "use, relations, function, especially of sexual intercourse." Paul is not addressing natural desires but natural functions in this context. He is not discussing one's sexual desires or the nature of the sexual relationship, such as whether it is abusive, exploitative, or unloving. Instead, he is addressing how human beings are designed to function sexually.

Paul states that the error of homosexuality involves forsaking the "natural function of the woman" and rejecting the sexual companion designed by God thereby rejecting God Himself. The passion that leads to exchanging the natural function of sex between a man and a woman for the unnatural function of sex between individuals of the same sex is what Paul describes as a "degrading passion". Paul describes this behavior as a lust of the heart, an impurity that is dishonoring to the body; an indecent act and an error; unnatural; not proper and the product of a depraved mind.

The passage's point cannot be missed unless someone is in total rebellion against God, which aligns with Paul's assertion that homosexual behavior is evidence of *active, persistent, and willful rebellion* against the Creator. Overall, there is no indication in this passage that Paul restricts his condemnation of homosexuality to behavior characterized by lustfulness, disrespect, and selfishness rather than love and commitment. Homosexual conduct is considered wrong simply because it is seen as rejecting the natural sexual complement ordained by God for man: a woman. This perspective is attributed to Paul and, by extension, to God Himself as highlighted from the very beginning.

The Reformation Project has a lot more to say on the inclusion of LGBTQ in the churches today. As Christ said in Matthew 7:15-16 **“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.”**

DECRYPTING THE RISKS OF CBDCS



RAY ST. MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Within the scriptures, various prophecies provide insights into the control and influence exerted by the beast power, a worldwide authority. In particular, Revelation 13 speaks to a time when such authority will require individuals to have a mark on their hand or forehead to be able to engage in commerce activity.



ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF), IN THEIR SEPTEMBER 2022 REPORT, 'THE ASCENT OF CBDCs, AS OF JULY 2022, THERE WERE NEARLY 100 CBDCs IN RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT STAGES WORLDWIDE WITH AT LEAST 17 PILOTED OR IMPLEMENTED. THE IMF IN ANOTHER REPORT, "CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCY ADOPTION: A TWO-SIDED MODEL" (JUNE, 2023), ALSO INDICATED THAT THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGION HAVE BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF ADOPTING THIS DIGITAL MONEY. PRESENTLY, JAMAICA HAS ALSO IMPLEMENTED JAMAICA'S DIGITAL CURRENCY, JAM-DEX. IT WAS LAUNCHED ON JULY 11, 2020 AND IS LEGAL TENDER, ISSUED BY THE BANK OF JAMAICA ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS WITH BANKNOTES AND COINS. IT IS STORED IN A DIGITAL WALLET, LYNK, WHICH WAS DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL COMMERCIAL BANK (NCB) FINANCIAL GROUP. LYNK IS AN APP FOR MOBILE DEVICES THAT MAKES IT EASY FOR USERS TO SEND, RECEIVE AND SPEND THEIR MONEY.

THE SECOND BEAST WAS GIVEN POWER TO GIVE BREATH TO THE IMAGE OF THE FIRST BEAST, SO THAT THE IMAGE COULD SPEAK AND CAUSE ALL WHO REFUSED TO WORSHIP THE IMAGE TO BE KILLED. 16 IT ALSO FORCED ALL PEOPLE, GREAT AND SMALL, RICH AND POOR, FREE AND SLAVE, TO RECEIVE A MARK ON THEIR RIGHT HANDS OR ON THEIR FOREHEADS, 17 SO THAT THEY COULD NOT BUY OR SELL UNLESS THEY HAD THE MARK, WHICH IS THE NAME OF THE BEAST OR THE NUMBER OF ITS NAME.
REVELATION 13:15

In our present context, Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) have emerged as a new form of digital currency issued and regulated by central banks, revolutionizing the financial landscape. They are designed to enhance the efficiency, security, and transparency of financial transactions.

The emergence of this new form of currency begs us to ponder, could CBDCs play a role in fulfilling these prophetic conditions? While we exercise caution in drawing direct correlations, we consider the

possibilities and their alignment with scripture.

This article will outline how CBDCs function, while examining their significance and the potential implications within the context of prophetic scripture.

As of 2021, there were 7.888 billion people in the world. That is an exceedingly large amount of people to police, considering that each person's eligibility to engage in commercial transactions will have to be effectively monitored and regulated for the beast system to function. What tools and infrastructures may facilitate the future enforcement of this global system?

The rise of CBDCs demonstrates the increased reliance on, and incorporation of technology in the essential functions of our modern world. This aligns with Revelation 13, which suggests the implementation of sophisticated systems by the global authority. As CBDCs continue to evolve and gain widespread adoption, discussions surrounding privacy concerns and individual liberties arise, challenging believers

to navigate these complex issues with a biblical perspective.

CBDCs are a digital representation of a country's fiat currency or cash, issued and backed by the central bank. They operate on distributed ledger technology (DLT) or blockchain networks, ensuring secure and transparent transactions. CBDCs offer several advantages over traditional cash, including faster settlement times, reduced costs, and enhanced traceability.

CBDCs can operate in different ways, but two main models exist: token-based and account-based. In the token-based model, digital tokens representing the CBDC are issued and transferred between users' digital wallets. Each token carries a unique identifier, making it traceable. In the account-based model, CBDCs are held in user accounts directly linked to the central bank. Transactions occur through these accounts, allowing for instant transfers and seamless integration with existing banking systems.

Usually CBDCs are accessible through a digital wallet or an app that is installed on a mobile device.

GOVERNMENT ENFORCEMENT & DATA PRIVACY:

CBDCs provide governments with a new tool of enforcement due to their inherent traceability and programmable nature. While this can be advantageous for combating illicit activities such as money laundering and terrorism financing, it also raises concerns about data privacy. Here are a few key considerations:

TRANSACTION MONITORING:

CBDCs enable governments to monitor transactions in real-time. While this can enhance oversight and regulatory compliance, it also raises concerns about the extent of surveillance. Governments may have access to detailed information, including transaction history, amounts, and parties involved, potentially compromising individual privacy.

USER IDENTIFICATION AND DATA COLLECTION:

To access and use CBDCs, individuals may be required to undergo a comprehensive identification process, linking their digital wallet to personal information. Governments may collect and store this data, raising questions about the security and potential misuse of sensitive personal information.

PROGRAMMABLE MONEY AND RESTRICTIONS:

CBDCs can be designed with programmable features, allowing governments to impose restrictions on the use of funds. While this can be useful for targeted interventions like disaster relief or welfare programs, it also grants governments significant control over individuals' financial activities. Striking a balance between necessary restrictions and individual freedoms becomes critical in maintaining privacy and personal autonomy.

THE WEAPONIZATION OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCES:

Would governments really weaponize an individual's access to finances for them to conform to a behaviour or ideology? In the intricate world of global politics, we have seen where economics and finances have become powerful tools that can be leveraged to bring entities, be it nations or individuals, into subjection. This approach exploits an entity's dependency on financial stability and access to markets, effectively placing them in a vulnerable position. By manipulating economic levers, such as trade barriers, sanctions, or currency devaluation, powerful actors can wield substantial influence over their targets.

The weaponization of economics and finances prevents several implications and challenges,, as they are often employed as a tool by powerful nations to exert dominance and influence over others. It creates an uneven playing field and undermines the principles of fair trade and cooperation.

IRAN

Iran has been a prominent example of a country subjected to economic sanctions by the international community, primarily led by the United States. Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, these sanctions are often related to Iran's nuclear program and political activities and have had far-reaching economic consequences. They have led to a devaluation of the Iranian rial, soaring inflation, and difficulties in accessing essential goods and services for the population. The intention behind such sanctions is to pressure the Iranian government to change its behaviour.

POLAND

In 2020, six Polish towns had their funding applications to "twin" with other European Union cities – similar to "sister cities" in the United States – were rejected by the European Commission for declaring themselves to be "LGBT-free". The trend began in March 2019 when small towns passed resolutions declaring themselves free of "LGBT ideology. A growing local trend where municipalities issue resolutions declaring themselves unwelcoming toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people."

RUSSIA

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the United States and its allies have implemented a broad sweep of sanctions, focused on isolating Russia from the global financial system, reducing the profitability of its energy sector, and blunting its military edge. These sanctions add to a bevy of economic punishments that were already imposed on Moscow after it annexed Crimea in 2014.

These examples underscore the significance of economic control and manipulation in the realm of geopolitics, where powerful nations or entities employ economic tools to exert influence, achieve political objectives, or coerce others into compliance. If sanctions can be imposed on countries and towns, how much more individuals and even more believers who are against the ideology of the beast system?

The development and expansion of CBDCs within this context adds an intriguing layer to the discussion. There is potential for far more sophisticated systems of control and surveillance in the global financial landscape which supports the prophetic themes mentioned from Revelation 13.

CBDCs offer several avenues for weaponizing economic control and threatening the survival of targeted entities:

***RESTRICTING ACCESS AND TRANSACTIONAL RIGHTS:**
Governments or central banks can selectively limit access to CBDCs or impose transactional restrictions on certain individuals, entities, or sectors. This restriction hampers financial access, creating economic difficulties for the targeted entities.

***FINANCIAL SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL:**
CBDCs enable comprehensive financial surveillance, allowing authorities to monitor transactions in real-time. By scrutinizing and controlling financial activities, governments can implement strategies and policies to exert control over individuals or entities.

***IMPOSING TRANSACTION COSTS AND FEES:**
Through CBDCs, authorities can impose high transaction costs or fees on specific individuals or industries. This can significantly disrupt financial viability, forcing compliance through economic pressure.

***PROGRAMMABLE MONEY AND RESTRICTIONS:**
CBDCs can be designed with programmable features, allowing authorities to impose restrictions on the use of funds. By implementing time limits, conditional spending, or specific transaction requirements, financial access can be tightly controlled to influence behaviour and compliance.

In the future, if individuals or entities seek to avoid or diversify their exposure to CBDCs while retaining a store of value, they can consider the following methods:

TRADITIONAL BANKING AND FIAT CURRENCIES:
Maintaining a diversified portfolio that includes traditional banking accounts denominated in fiat currencies can provide a store of value outside the realm of CBDCs. This approach allows individuals to hold funds in established currencies like the US dollar, Euro, or Yuan.

CRYPTOCURRENCIES:
Investing in established cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin (BTC) or Ethereum (ETH) can offer an alternative store of value. These decentralized digital currencies operate independently of CBDCs and can provide diversification and potential long-term value appreciation though subject to volatility and regulatory changes.

PRECIOUS METALS:
Investing in physical precious metals such as gold, silver, or platinum can serve as a traditional store of value. Precious metals have been recognized as a reliable store of wealth throughout history and can act as a hedge against inflation and currency devaluation.

REAL ESTATE AND PROPERTY:
Owning real estate or property can provide a tangible and valuable asset. Land, residential or commercial properties, and other real estate investments have the potential to retain or appreciate in value over time.

DIVERSIFICATION AND PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT:
Spreading investments across various asset classes can reduce exposure to any single form of currency or financial instrument. A well-diversified portfolio may include a combination of stocks, bonds, commodities, real estate, and alternative investments, allowing for a balanced approach to preserving wealth.

PEER-TO-PEER (P2P) TRADING AND BARTERING:
These systems facilitate direct transactions between individuals, bypassing centralized currencies and financial institutions. A good source of bartering would be things the people need to survive Eg. Food and agriculture or fresh water.

The aforementioned is a reminder of the timeless adage “do not keep all your eggs in one basket”; emphasizing the need for diversification. As believers, we should be prepared for challenging times ahead and ensure we have assets that can be quickly converted to cash if necessary; staying vigilant about developments in commerce and technology. CBDCs may not be the mark of the beast but it provides an understanding of a potential avenue for its implementation and enforcement. Take sleep and mark death.

PLASTIC



FEMINISM

SEAN GOLDBURN



SOURCE - WHAT "CAREER BARBIE" REALLY NEEDS. WOMEN'SENEWS.COM

The latest craze in terms of blockbuster movies has nothing to do with Marvel or DC comics or vigilante Killer seeking justice after the loss of his wife and his dog, but rather all about the porcelain doll Barbie coming alive in the hearts and mind of over forty million worldwide!!! But is this doll really a threat to social norms as defined by the word of God? Is it a challenge to the biblical authority of men? Is it fostering the revitalization of the feminist movement which suffered under the hands of the LGBTQ community's rise to attention? Or, is it just much to do about nothing?

Since Barbie's introduction in 1959, her impact has been revolutionary. Far from being a toy designed by men to enslave women, she was a toy invented by women with a message of proto-feminism "fitted with paraphernalia of a self-sufficient modern woman who could very well sustain herself" as told by cultural critic and investigative journalist M.G. Lord, herself a first-generation Barbie owner. She goes on to say, "She's got that body, no husband and the ability to make a living in a real field"; drawing on a connection to Helen Gurley Brown's "Sex and the Single Girl" which made a case for the financial and sexual autonomy of women.

If you haven't seen the movie as yet and plan to do so, beware, spoilers ahead. Nevertheless, what is strikingly obvious is that the film contains subtle references to the Genesis story throughout, suggesting that its source predates the creation of the mid-century doll.

The movie begins with a tribute to Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey," reimagined as young girls playing with baby dolls in the pre-Barbie era, which, for Greta Gerwig's (film director and playwright of the 2023 film, Barbie) purposes, symbolizes a time akin to the Biblical description of "the earth being unformed and void." The fundamental storyline of "Barbie" is straightforward: there are two parallel worlds, Barbieland and the real world. Barbieland is idyllic, free of conflict, impeccably designed, and every day is perfect – it is, in a word, edenic.

In contrast, the real world is fraught with deceitfulness, resentment, sexism, corporate culture, and various other problems. The essence of "Barbie" lies in the tension between the apparent dualities established in the Garden of Eden: good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, creator and creation, and most importantly, woman and man.

Barbie encounters God (played by Ruth, the founder of the doll).

While Barbie herself resembles all other Barbie dolls, Ruth is a self-described "five-foot tall woman". So, how do we interpret the idea and promise of "God said, 'let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" in this context? The character Ruth explains that she created Barbie not to mirror herself but to embody her aspirations for young girls, enabling them to envision a future where they could become whatever they desired. It's a softer form of power, one that comes with fewer conditions and limitations.

Within Barbieland, where all women bear the name Barbie and all men bear the name Ken, they live in a state of blissful unawareness until a stereotypical Barbie character starts grappling with intrusive thoughts and physical changes, which symbolize Barbieland's equivalent of gaining knowledge of good and evil. This marks a division between the two parallel worlds, prompting Barbie to embark on a quest to uncover the truth in the real world. This forms the central conflict of the movie: departing from paradise and navigating the flawed world as a human; specifically, as a woman. Even though Gerwig diverges from the Genesis narrative – there's no serpent – she zeroes in on the implications of the relationship between man and woman.

Genesis 2:7 tells us:

THE LORD GOD SAID, "IT IS NOT GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE; I WILL MAKE A FITTING HELPER FOR HIM." ... HE TOOK ONE OF HIS RIBS AND CLOSED UP THE FLESH AT THAT SPOT. AND THE LORD GOD FASHIONED THE RIB THAT HE HAD TAKEN FROM THE MAN INTO A WOMAN; AND HE BROUGHT HER TO THE MAN.

GENESIS 2:7

This framing of the relationship between men and women serves as a theological rationale for a patriarchal social system, where women, are created from men and therefore seemingly dependent on them, are seen as existing primarily to assist men, their helpmeet. However, in "Barbie," Gerwig flips this perspective by drawing inspiration from the historical emergence of Barbie in 1959, which preceded the introduction of Ken by two years. Ken's sole purpose is to be Barbie's boyfriend, as if to suggest, "It's not good for Barbie to be alone; I will create a suitable companion for her." This represents a deliberate reversal of traditional roles, aligning the character of Ken with that of Eve. In the world of Barbie, Kens similarly occupy a position akin to that of Eve in the Garden of Eden – subordinate, secondary to Barbies, and constantly defined by their association with Barbie. This dynamic is later explored in the film, as Kens gradually come to recognize their value and identity apart from their Barbies.

The tree from which Eve takes the fruit represents the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In the Barbie universe, such a tree is absent because there is no concept of sin. However, when

Barbie and Ken venture into the real world, it is Ken who brings back 'sin' in the form of his newly found understanding of patriarchy in comparison to what he had previously believed.

Thus, Ken, in a role similar to Eve's, introduces sin into the Barbie world and triggers its downfall. As a consequence, just as God's curse on Eve and all women condemns them to perpetual subordination to men and the pain of childbirth, Ken's punishment reflects a similar theme – he must grapple with the possibility of never being with Barbie and finding his own identity independent of her. Ken's – the Kens' – dawning awareness of this unequal structure is the secondary conflict, and the more surprising and poignant struggle.

No one can deny the evident parallelism between the rise of the Barbie phenomenon and the feminist movement. The roots can be traced as far back as the 1800s, during great debates after the abolition of slavery and the fate of women who, by all accounts, were left powerless. They could not vote, own property, nor have custody over their children during a divorce. The women who were founding members of the feminist movement and forerunners of the first wave of feminism sought equal treatment and the opportunity to be recognized as human beings, not as property.

In an ironic twist, many of the equality feminists were very much guided by religious beliefs and principles, advocating for a pro-heterosexual family lifestyle and against divorce. They campaigned against human trafficking, prostitution, child labor, and disparities in wages and living standards between the rich and poor. As Barbie grew and adapted to society, so did the modern feminist movement

movement, which quickly began to view religion and the Bible as adversaries. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a renowned feminist writer of the 1800s, published a book entitled "The Woman's Bible" in 1895. Within its pages, she reinterpreted the Holy Bible without hesitation, specifically altering scriptures related to women and asserting that the Bible was not inspired by God but had been intentionally manipulated by male translators.

Not to be left behind as feminist ideas and perspectives on womanhood evolved, Barbie and her friends also evolved. Serah Seltzer, a writer for Time magazine, reminisced about her time spent with her Barbie and how it revolutionized her thinking as a devoted feminist. "And yet, even as I was sliding those ridiculous high heels onto my Barbie's ankles, I was also plotting a revolution, to the extent a child can. I was a pint-sized feminist, an advocate for reproductive rights..."

There is no denying the role Barbie played in the modern feminist movement. This was further fueled by the civil rights movements of the 1960s, which ushered in a second wave of feminism with radical ideas that challenged biblical principles of marriage and family life.

One may argue that just as modern-day Barbie dolls have evolved for the betterment of their patrons, so has the third wave of the feminist movement matured into something beneficial. Now, women can vote, receive better wages, and enjoy a greater level of independence.

However, there are major deficits that have been linked to the long list of side effects rapidly presented during your popular medication advertisements. It would be disingenuous of me to somehow attribute all these issues to the rise of modern-day feminist ideology, but one can't help but notice the cause-and-effect link between the two phenomena. Women shifted their focus from homes to the workplace, affecting the family unit, especially the nurturing role in the home.

Now, I can sense liberated female readers cringing as they read, muttering to themselves, "Here we go, another man telling us what we can't do? And that we are to stay home and nurture only." The issue is not about ability; it would be nonsensical to think that females are incapable of playing a positive role as leaders in the world, especially when statistics prove otherwise. The issue is what is ideal and what was the original intention of our Creator, the Almighty God. Titus 2:4-5 provides us with insight and a biblical perspective, pointing out the major role of nurturing in the home, training the children, and being the backbone of the family unit.

THEN THEY (OLDER WOMEN) CAN URGE THE YOUNGER
WOMEN TO LOVE THEIR HUSBANDS AND CHILDREN, 5
TO BE SELF-CONTROLLED AND PURE, TO BE BUSY AT
HOME, TO BE KIND, AND TO BE SUBJECT TO THEIR
HUSBANDS, SO THAT NO ONE WILL MALIGN THE WORD
OF GOD.

TITUS 2:4-5

So, the key is not to bend our will to the new Barbie World but to look to the women of valor as described in Proverbs 31. She is portrayed as an ideal and virtuous woman, a paragon of strength, virtue, wisdom, and industrious nature. The passage outlines her various qualities, including her dedication to her family, her business acumen, her compassion for the needy, her wisdom in speech and action, and her fear of the Lord. The Proverbs 31 Woman is seen as a symbol of wisdom, integrity, and a role model for women in terms of character, diligence, and devotion to both family and faith.

Now, this may very well have been the intention of the feminist movement at its outset, but it has become far removed in the present.

As the popular proverb says, **"the road to hell will be paved with good intentions."**

A WIFE OF NOBLE CHARACTER WHO CAN FIND?
SHE IS WORTH FAR MORE THAN RUBIES.

HER HUSBAND HAS FULL CONFIDENCE IN HER
AND LACKS NOTHING OF VALUE.

SHE BRINGS HIM GOOD, NOT HARM,
ALL THE DAYS OF HER LIFE.

SHE SELECTS WOOL AND FLAX
AND WORKS WITH EAGER HANDS.

SHE IS LIKE THE MERCHANT SHIPS,
BRINGING HER FOOD FROM AFAR.

SHE GETS UP WHILE IT IS STILL NIGHT;

SHE PROVIDES FOOD FOR HER FAMILY
AND PORTIONS FOR HER FEMALE SERVANTS.

SHE CONSIDERS A FIELD AND BUYS IT;
OUT OF HER EARNINGS SHE PLANTS A VINEYARD.

SHE SETS ABOUT HER WORK VIGOROUSLY;
HER ARMS ARE STRONG FOR HER TASKS.

SHE SEES THAT HER TRADING IS PROFITABLE,
AND HER LAMP DOES NOT GO OUT AT NIGHT.

IN HER HAND SHE HOLDS THE DISTAFF
AND GRASPS THE SPINDLE WITH HER FINGERS.

SHE OPENS HER ARMS TO THE POOR
AND EXTENDS HER HANDS TO THE NEEDY.

WHEN IT SNOWS, SHE HAS NO FEAR FOR HER HOUSEHOLD;
FOR ALL OF THEM ARE CLOTHED IN SCARLET.

SHE MAKES COVERINGS FOR HER BED;
SHE IS CLOTHED IN FINE LINEN AND PURPLE.

HER HUSBAND IS RESPECTED AT THE CITY GATE,
WHERE HE TAKES HIS SEAT AMONG THE ELDERS OF THE LAND.

SHE MAKES LINEN GARMENTS AND SELLS THEM,
AND SUPPLIES THE MERCHANTS WITH SASHES.

SHE IS CLOTHED WITH STRENGTH AND DIGNITY;
SHE CAN LAUGH AT THE DAYS TO COME.

SHE SPEAKS WITH WISDOM,

AND FAITHFUL INSTRUCTION IS ON HER TONGUE.

SHE WATCHES OVER THE AFFAIRS OF HER HOUSEHOLD
AND DOES NOT EAT THE BREAD OF IDLENESS.

HER CHILDREN ARISE AND CALL HER BLESSED;

HER HUSBAND ALSO, AND HE PRAISES HER:

"MANY WOMEN DO NOBLE THINGS,
BUT YOU SURPASS THEM ALL."

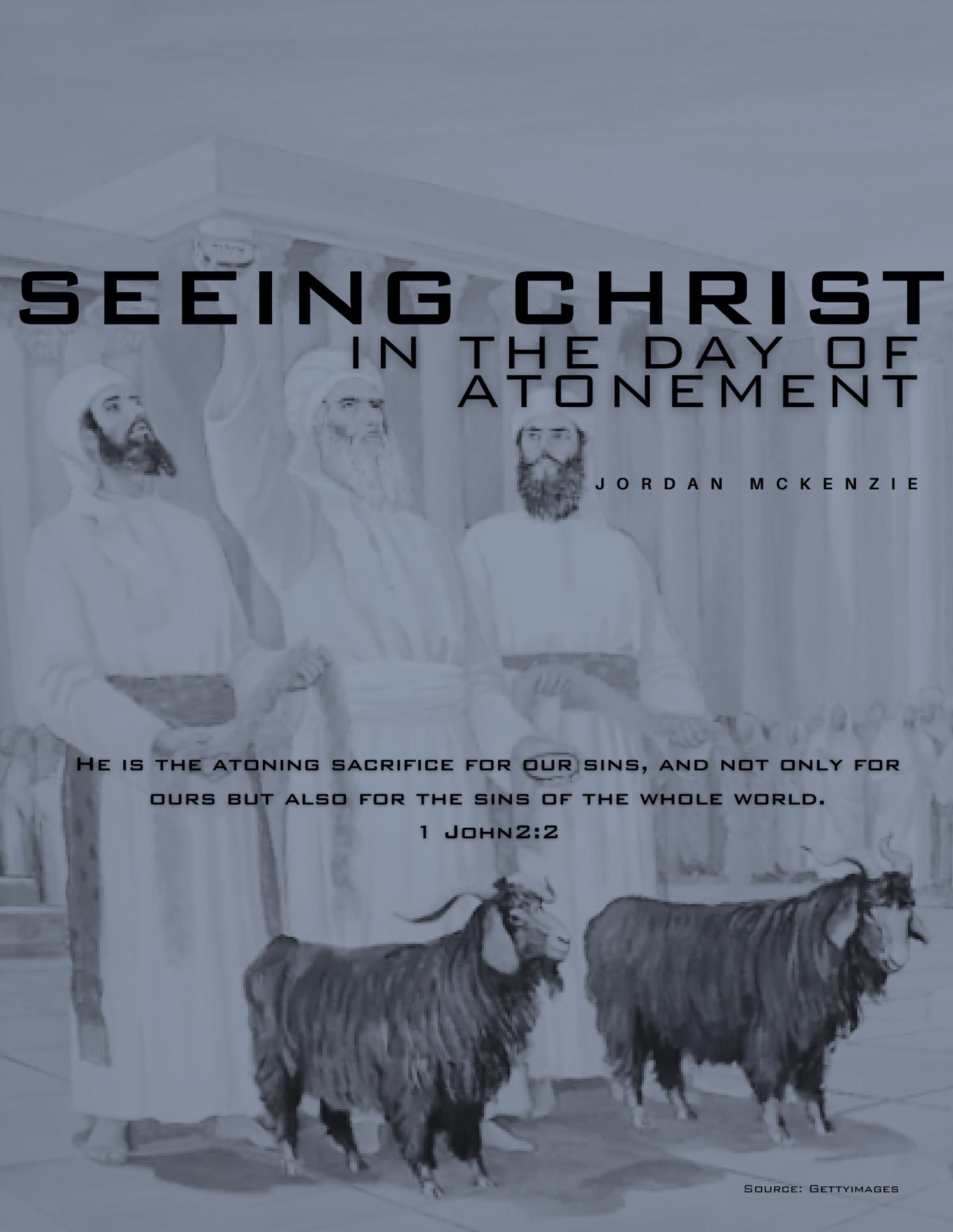
CHARM IS DECEPTIVE, AND BEAUTY IS FLEETING;

BUT A WOMAN WHO FEARS THE LORD IS TO BE PRAISED.

HONOR HER FOR ALL THAT HER HANDS HAVE DONE,

AND LET HER WORKS BRING HER PRAISE AT THE CITY GATE.

PROVERBS 31: 10-31



SEEING CHRIST IN THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

JORDAN MCKENZIE

HE IS THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT ONLY FOR
OURS BUT ALSO FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

1 JOHN 2:2

Before we can celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles we have to observe the Day of Atonement. Think about this statement from a spiritual point of view— because by the specified order of the days, it is quite obvious that the Day of Atonement comes before the Feast of Tabernacles. That is to say, before the dwelling of God can be brought down to man there needs to be a form of reparation, a restitution of some sort – a covering of one’s sin. Before we can enter the Shekinah Glory, which is the divine manifestation of God’s presence, we need to be purged of our sins.

The Day of Atonement represents the cleansing of the earthly tabernacle, not solely the physical structures which are made by human hands – but each of His called out ones is a vessel, one in whom God has chosen to dwell. We are God’s tabernacle; we are like a temple unto our Creator, and so we ought to present ourselves as holy before Him.

Leviticus 16 highlights in detail how the atonement ritual was to be carried out by the children of Israel. And throughout these verses employ a focused approach on the prominent role of Jesus Christ throughout this ceremony.

“—
THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AFTER THE DEATH OF THE TWO SONS OF AARON, WHEN THEY DREW NEAR BEFORE THE LORD AND DIED, AND THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, “TELL AARON YOUR BROTHER NOT TO COME AT ANY TIME INTO THE HOLY PLACE INSIDE THE VEIL, BEFORE THE MERCY SEAT THAT IS ON THE ARK, SO THAT HE MAY NOT DIE. FOR I WILL APPEAR IN THE CLOUD OVER THE MERCY SEAT.
LEVITICUS 16:1-2

THE MOST HOLY PLACE

The Holy Place inside the veil is in some translations rendered as the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies (qoḏes qaḏasim). And it is only once a year that the priest and more specifically the High Priest, could enter into the Most Holy Place; and that is on the Day of Atonement. If he goes in on Passover, he dies. If he enters during the Days of Unleavened Bread, Shavuot (or Pentecost), Rosh Hashana, Feast of Tabernacles if the High Priest goes into the Holy of Holies on any of these appointed times he will perish.

So there is something unique about the Day of Atonement that separates it from not only the other annual sacred festivals, but also every other day of the calendar. But to re-iterate the point that it is only on the Day of Atonement that the High Priest is allowed to go behind the veil, into the Holy of Holies, and make no mistake – he does not go without blood.

“—
BUT IN THIS WAY AARON SHALL COME INTO THE HOLY PLACE: WITH A BULL FROM THE HERD FOR A SIN OFFERING AND A RAM FOR A BURNT OFFERING. HE SHALL PUT ON THE HOLY LINEN COAT AND SHALL HAVE THE LINEN UNDERGARMENT ON HIS BODY, AND HE SHALL TIE THE LINEN SASH AROUND HIS WAIST, AND WEAR THE LINEN TURBAN; THESE ARE THE HOLY GARMENTS. HE SHALL BATHE HIS BODY IN WATER AND THEN PUT THEM ON.
LEVITICUS 16:3-4

JESUS OUR HIGH PRIEST

Aaron is in a role that foreshadows the one which Jesus plays in the salvation process.

“—
FOR EVERY HIGH PRIEST CHOSEN FROM AMONG MEN IS APPOINTED TO ACT ON BEHALF OF MEN IN RELATION TO GOD, TO OFFER GIFTS AND SACRIFICES FOR SINS. HE CAN DEAL GENTLY WITH THE IGNORANT AND WAYWARD, SINCE HE HIMSELF IS BESET WITH WEAKNESS.
HEBREWS 5:1-2

The major difference between Jesus and Aaron is that Jesus Himself was not beset with weakness – Jesus was sinless, perfect in every way, righteous unto His very death. While He was on earth He maintained a spiritual state that no other man can boast about. But does that mean that He is unable to deal gently with us in our ignorance? Is He incapable of showing compassion to the wayward soul? Of course not!

“—
FOR WE DO NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIEST WHO IS UNABLE TO SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT ONE WHO IN EVERY RESPECT HAS BEEN TEMPTED AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN.
HEBREWS 4:15

And because of that we have the confidence to draw near to throne of grace, because Jesus in our representative before God. He understands our struggles, He understands our addictions, He understands the very sins that cripple us – those that cause us to remain in a cycle of shame and regret. And on the Day of Atonement, our High Priest is giving us an opportunity for a fresh start.

THE MIKVAH (WASHING)

Let us observe the order in which things were to be done. Before Aaron could carry out his duties, he has to undergo a ritual washing – a Mikvah; a cleansing with water.

“—
| THEN JESUS CAME FROM GALILEE TO THE JORDAN TO
| BE BAPTIZED BY JOHN. BUT JOHN TRIED TO DETER
| HIM, SAYING, “I NEED TO BE BAPTIZED BY YOU, AND
| DO YOU COME TO ME?” JESUS REPLIED, “LET IT BE
| SO NOW; IT IS PROPER FOR US TO DO THIS TO FULFILL
| ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS.” THEN JOHN CONSENTED.
|
| MATTHEW 3:13-15

In this way, we see that before Jesus began His ministry of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, which is an important mission of reconciling souls to God; He first had to be washed. Not because He had to be cleansed of any sin, but in His own words, it was proper for this to be done in order to fulfil all righteousness. Aaron who was in the role of the High Priest had to first be cleansed with water before he could put on the holy garments.

THE HOLY GARMENTS (HUMILITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS)

The garments the High Priest wore on the Day of Atonement were not the ones he was accustomed to wearing throughout the year, at least they were not his full attire – they were only a subset.

“—
| THEN BRING NEAR TO YOU AARON YOUR BROTHER,
| AND HIS SONS WITH HIM, FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE
| OF ISRAEL, TO SERVE ME AS PRIESTS—AARON AND
| AARON'S SONS, NADAB AND ABIHU, ELEAZAR AND
| ITHAMAR. AND YOU SHALL MAKE HOLY GARMENTS FOR
| AARON YOUR BROTHER, FOR GLORY AND FOR BEAUTY.
| YOU SHALL SPEAK TO ALL THE SKILLFUL, WHOM I
| HAVE FILLED WITH A SPIRIT OF SKILL, THAT THEY MAKE
| AARON'S GARMENTS TO CONSECRATE HIM FOR MY
| PRIESTHOOD. THESE ARE THE GARMENTS THAT THEY
| SHALL MAKE: A BRESTPIECE,

AN EPHOD, A ROBE, A COAT OF CHECKER WORK, A
TURBAN, AND A SASH. THEY SHALL MAKE HOLY
GARMENTS FOR AARON YOUR BROTHER AND HIS SONS TO
SERVE ME AS PRIESTS. THEY SHALL RECEIVE GOLD, BLUE
AND PURPLE AND SCARLET YARNS, AND FINE TWINED
LINEN.
EXODUS 28:1-5

These garments were made for glory and for beauty. When you read the entire chapter of Exodus 28, you will see that in addition to the fine twined linen, the ephod was to be decked with four (4) rows of precious stones – one stone for each tribe of Israel.

One can assume that as the High Priest walked through the camp, the light would bounce off the gold yarn that was interwoven in his garment and it would sparkle. So when the people saw him, they didn't have any question as to who he was; everyone knew that he was the High Priest. And if by any chance you had your back turned to him while he was walking through the camp, you would hear him as he passed by; because on the hem of his robe there was a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around.

There was no one in the entire camp who was more beautifully adorned than the High Priest. But on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, he was to be stripped of his glory and his beauty; and all he had on was white linen garments.

And we ask ourselves the question, “What did the Messiah do when He came on the earth to atone for the sins of mankind?”

“—
| HAVE THIS MIND AMONG YOURSELVES, WHICH IS YOURS
| IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO, THOUGH HE WAS IN THE FORM
| OF GOD, DID NOT COUNT EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING
| TO BE GRASPED, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, BY TAKING THE
| FORM OF A SERVANT, BEING BORN IN THE LIKENESS OF
| MEN. AND BEING FOUND IN HUMAN FORM, HE HUMBLED
| HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF
| DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

The Day of Atonement is a day that is to be approached with a spirit of humility. It is not a day to be thinking about ourselves and our own desires. It is a day when we afflict ourselves, it is a day of fasting and meditation on the spiritual significance of removing sin from our lives. It is a day of deep reflection and humility. Another quality

of the holy garments worn by the High Priest is that it represents being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ!

“— THEN I HEARD WHAT SEEMED TO BE THE VOICE OF A GREAT MULTITUDE, LIKE THE ROAR OF MANY WATERS AND LIKE THE SOUND OF MIGHTY PEALS OF THUNDER, CRYING OUT, “HALLELUJAH! FOR THE LORD OUR GOD THE ALMIGHTY REIGNS. LET US REJOICE AND EXULT AND GIVE HIM THE GLORY, FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB HAS COME, AND HIS BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY; IT WAS GRANTED HER TO CLOTHE HERSELF WITH FINE LINEN, BRIGHT AND PURE”— FOR THE FINE LINEN IS THE

RIGHTEOUS DEEDS OF THE SAINTS.

REVELATION 19:6-8

And it goes without saying, that our righteous acts are merely what God has empowered us to do through Jesus; because if it were for our righteousness alone, we would be in deep trouble.

“— ALL OF US HAVE BECOME LIKE ONE WHO IS UNCLEAN, AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS ARE LIKE FILTHY RAGS; WE ALL SHRIVEL UP LIKE A LEAF, AND LIKE THE WIND

OUR SINS SWEEP US AWAY.

ISAIAH 64:6

So we do not have anything to boast about; it is not our acts that give us right standing in the eyes of God, but it is His grace and His desire to cleanse us of our sins why we are able to enter into His presence.

“— COME NOW, LET US REASON TOGETHER, SAYS THE LORD: THOUGH YOUR SINS ARE LIKE SCARLET, THEY SHALL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW; THOUGH THEY ARE RED

LIKE CRIMSON, THEY SHALL BECOME LIKE WOOL.

ISAIAH 1:18

What you have to recognize is that the shame of nakedness and the need for us to be clothed came as a result of sin. In Genesis 3 it records that when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit both their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

Finally, recall the account of Jesus' transfiguration.

“— AND AFTER SIX DAYS JESUS TOOK WITH HIM PETER AND JAMES AND JOHN, AND LED THEM UP A HIGH MOUNTAIN BY THEMSELVES. AND HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM, AND HIS CLOTHES BECAME RADIANT, INTENSELY

WHITE, AS NO ONE ON EARTH COULD BLEACH THEM.

MARK 9:2-3

It is worth stating again that the Day of Atonement is symbolic of us being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ – which is a righteousness that exceeds anything that could possibly exist on this earth.

And while there is no dress code for the Day of Atonement per se, keep in mind the significance of white garments and what it symbolizes – to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ as He takes our sins away.

And so, going back to Leviticus 16, the High Priest himself was not a righteous man; but he walked in the shadow of the One who was and is. Having washed himself, having put on the holy garments, the High Priest is now able to make an atonement for himself and for his household. Before he can atone for the sins of the people, he himself has to be clean – his sins have to be atoned for.

THE TWO GOATS

“— AND HE SHALL TAKE FROM THE CONGREGATION OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL TWO MALE GOATS FOR A SIN OFFERING, AND ONE RAM FOR A BURNT OFFERING. THEN HE SHALL TAKE THE TWO GOATS AND SET THEM BEFORE THE LORD AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE TENT OF MEETING. AND AARON SHALL CAST LOTS OVER THE TWO GOATS, ONE LOT FOR THE LORD AND THE

OTHER LOT FOR AZAZEL.

LEVITICUS 16:5-8

Now, this is the much-anticipated verse in the entire chapter, and there is much debate as to what or who these two goats represent. However, the Church of God's position is that the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord, the goat which is slain, represents Christ, and the other; the goat of departure, or the Azazel – represents Satan.

Understanding the role of each one in the atonement ritual will help us see an important distinction that makes the Day of Atonement unique from all the other days.

The first thing we read in verse 5 is that the two goats were to be selected for a sin offering. But before that, Leviticus 4 reminds us of what God had commanded the Israelites to do when presenting a sin offering.

“—
 AND THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING, “SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, SAYING, IF ANYONE SINS UNINTENTIONALLY[A] IN ANY OF THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS ABOUT THINGS NOT TO BE DONE, AND DOES ANY ONE OF THEM, IF IT IS THE ANOINTED PRIEST WHO SINS, THUS BRINGING GUILT ON THE PEOPLE, THEN HE SHALL OFFER FOR THE SIN THAT HE HAS COMMITTED A BULL FROM THE HERD WITHOUT BLEMISH TO THE LORD FOR A SIN OFFERING. HE SHALL BRING THE BULL TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE TENT OF MEETING BEFORE THE LORD AND LAY HIS HAND ON THE HEAD OF THE BULL AND KILL THE BULL BEFORE THE LORD.

LEVITICUS 4:1

ANIMALS FOR A SIN OFFERING

These are the requirements for the various people who sin unintentionally and have to present a sin offering unto the Lord.

- **Priest** – bull from the herd, without blemish
- **Entire congregation** - bull from the herd, without blemish
- **Leader** – a male goat, without blemish
- **Common person** – a female goat, without blemish. If he brings a lamb as his offering, he should bring a female without blemish.

TRANSFER OF GUILT

In every single case, hands were to be laid on the head of the animal and it was to be killed before the Lord. This laying on of hands was symbolic of the sins of the guilty party being transferred to the innocent animal; and the sacrifice depicts the punishment that should have been meted out on the transgressor. In other words, the animal is killed in the place of the sinner.

SPRINKLING OF BLOOD

Only in cases where the Priest or the whole congregation has sinned is blood supposed to be sprinkled seven times before the Lord in front of the veil. In the other two cases, the blood is just placed on the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest is poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering. By the way, these two things were also done for the priest who sinned and when the whole congregation sinned.

At the end of this ritual, (some details excluded) it is stated that atonement is made for the individual or the congregation and their sins are forgiven.

THE GOAT FOR THE LORD

“—
 THEN HE SHALL KILL THE GOAT OF THE SIN OFFERING THAT IS FOR THE PEOPLE AND BRING ITS BLOOD INSIDE THE VEIL AND DO WITH ITS BLOOD AS HE DID WITH THE BLOOD OF THE BULL, SPRINKLING IT OVER THE MERCY SEAT AND IN FRONT OF THE MERCY SEAT. 16 THUS HE SHALL MAKE ATONEMENT FOR THE HOLY PLACE, BECAUSE OF THE UNCLEANNESSES OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND BECAUSE OF THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS, ALL THEIR SINS. AND SO HE SHALL DO FOR THE TENT OF MEETING, WHICH DWELLS WITH THEM IN THE MIDST OF THEIR UNCLEANNESSES.

LEVITICUS 16:15-16

The difference between the sin offering on a regular day versus on the Day of Atonement is that:

- No hands are laid on the goat that is killed. There is no transfer of guilt to the animal that is slain.
- Atonement is made for the Holy Place or the Sanctuary. The tabernacle had become polluted with blood day after day because of the uncleanness of the people. And so, the blood of the goat that was slain was used to cleanse the sanctuary. If it is that the sins of the people were placed on the head of this goat before it was killed, it would just be adding another record of sin to the altar, thus polluting the sanctuary even further.

The Day of Atonement was the one day each year when the Tabernacle would be cleansed.

THE GOAT OF DEPARTURE

Now there's a problem, the Holy Place has just been atoned for (or cleansed) and the people are still defiled. There is another goat which is also for a sin offering, but they can't kill it and sprinkle its blood in front of the veil where they had just purified. So what's the solution?

“—
 AND WHEN HE HAS MADE AN END OF ATONING FOR THE HOLY PLACE AND THE TENT OF MEETING AND THE ALTAR, HE SHALL PRESENT THE LIVE GOAT. AND AARON SHALL LAY BOTH HIS HANDS ON THE HEAD OF THE LIVE GOAT, AND CONFESS OVER IT ALL THE INIQUITIES OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, AND ALL THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS, ALL THEIR SINS. AND HE SHALL PUT THEM ON THE HEAD OF THE GOAT AND SEND IT AWAY INTO THE WILDERNESS BY THE HAND OF A MAN WHO IS IN READINESS. THE GOAT SHALL BEAR ALL THEIR INIQUITIES ON ITSELF TO A REMOTE AREA, AND HE SHALL LET THE GOAT GO FREE IN THE WILDERNESS.

LEVITICUS 16:20-22.

In this unique way, atonement if made for the entire congregation – through the confession of the sins of the people on the head of the goat, and leading him outside of the camp, never to return. This is the significance of the two goats, together as a single sin offering they were able to both symbolically cleanse the sanctuary and atone for the sins of the people.



AND IT SHALL BE A STATUTE TO YOU FOREVER THAT IN THE SEVENTH MONTH, ON THE TENTH DAY OF THE MONTH, YOU SHALL AFFLICT YOURSELVES[6] AND SHALL DO NO WORK, EITHER THE NATIVE OR THE STRANGER WHO SOJOURNS AMONG YOU. 30 FOR ON THIS DAY SHALL ATONEMENT BE MADE FOR YOU TO CLEANSE YOU. YOU SHALL BE CLEAN BEFORE THE LORD FROM ALL YOUR SINS. 31 IT IS A SABBATH OF SOLEMN REST TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL AFFLICT YOURSELVES; IT IS A STATUTE FOREVER.

LEVITICUS 16:29-31



Y C L U U Q C X O J M E V T E M P L E X
 B O Y M O O D F O S U R K J Z V W K D Z
 H O M A Y X H O L Y O F H O L I E S W T
 A V B K H R F Z F I M H V L Z P R I C F
 R H B X I W A T E R U I M U O T Y S Q C
 A E N U Q P E L A S D G O O R I Z R X T
 L B G L K W P H H B K H Z F S K X A Y A
 A R W P I K R U N L E P U C W E Y E X A
 V E B O U M Y M R L S R M N K D S L E G
 M W I E I S E C A V V I N M J H P I E O
 J E R U S A L E M M X E Y A D O J T L A
 V N S Z N K V R B G A S I E C E T E E T
 V F T I B T N E F M H T I V S L B S R R
 X Y S V V E L X K Z J P S D V H E T M Q
 A T O N E M E N T C O H I R Q Q U E Y C
 O M A M K U U C F K V Z B E P B P A U V
 F C M I Z Q Q N A X S L S I N E H T L V
 W S A B B A T H M S Q Z T P C V I G B Q
 G A P P O I N T E D T I M E K A V X V O
 X U H E K J F R E B U R N T K X H F F J

HOLY OF HOLIES
 WATER
 HEBREW
 HIGH PRIEST
 ISRAELITES
 MOSES

ATONEMENT
 YOM KIPPUR
 TEMPLE
 GOAT
 SIN
 TABERNACLE

YAHWEH
 JERUSALEM
 :BURNT
 SABBATH
 YESHUA
 APPOINTED TIME

As we continue to rehearse the day year after year, we wait with great anticipation for the day when sin will be ultimately removed from mankind, when the curse of death and pain will be lifted; but rather a time of basking in the blessings of life.

PUNISHMENT OF SATAN

We are also looking forward to the day when Satan will be punished for the part that he played in deceiving mankind – for denying us of that relationship that we were meant to have with our Creator. He will no doubt pay for the sin and chaos that he cause to come upon the world.

Let us not align ourselves with him lest we share in his destruction. But let us be found clothed in the righteousness of Christ, our High Priest and our atoning sacrifice.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The **Institute of Religion (IOR)** invites the submission of opinion, research, or discussion papers for our religiously themed digital micro-magazine aimed at providing a unique perspective on current affairs and geopolitics through the lens of faith.

For our third issue, the IOR is accepting invitations until **February 29**. If you are interested in sharing your understanding of how the faith informs their perspective on current events, send us a copy at **ior@cgijamaica.org**

All submissions will undergo a review process.

guidelines

Each article should be:

- be between 800 - 1500 words in length
- include a title, author, and a brief summary
- submitted in MS Word format (doc or docx)
- written with font size 12 pt and double spaced

For any inquiries concerning the submission procedure, please do not hesitate to get in touch with any IOR member or email us at: ior@cgijamaica.org

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