

## ▶▶ When lightning changed history

There are events in our lives to which we can point and say, "At that point my life changed forever."

That might have been a good point. That might have been a bad one. Maybe just different. However, I think that most of us can recognize such points in our lives.

There are such points in the history of the world. Some points were instantaneous, such as the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the archduke of Austria-Hungary. Others were more gradual, such as the invasion of the Germanic tribes into Roman territory.

But the one thing that changed the world forever in the religious sense was a bolt of lightning. Literally.

▶▶ A young man, Martin Luther, was walking near Stotterheim, Germany on July 2, 1505. This care-free student was being encouraged by his father to become a lawyer and help his family business. But that was to quickly change.

▶▶ Luther had recently completed a Master's degree and started his law studies at the University of Erfurt. He was on his way back to Erfurt after having visited his parents when he was caught in a terrible thunder storm a few hours outside of Erfurt. Lightning struck near him and he was thrown to the ground by the air pressure it created. At this moment he called to Saint Anne: "I will become a monk!" That is, if St Anne's intercession saw him survive then Luther would enter a monastery.

Luther commented on this event later. It is assumed that he had played with the idea of becoming a monk even before the storm hit.

To his fathers disgust and anger, Luther honored his solemn promise; he had one last party with university friends on July 16 and the next day he entered the Black Monastery in Erfurt, Germany to become a monk.

So instead of Luther becoming a Lawyer, he became a bad monk, and eventually enemy #1 of the Roman Catholic church.

▶▶ Luther was a bad monk for 2 reasons. First, Luther's introspection and depression drove him to try to make atonement with what he saw as an angry God. He whipped himself, starved himself, and did whatever he could think of that might make him right before God. His superiors finally had to intervene to keep him from killing himself. But he could not find any peace.

The second reason that he was a bad monk was that he was not satisfied to just mumble through the liturgy and chant hymns. Here is where the church made a mistake. They directed him to the study of theology.

▶▶ This fitted his personality and intellect. Soon Luther was digging through the church fathers. Then Luther found the Bible. Chained to the monastery wall in the library.

This was the second major step in Luther's journey.

►► It was in the Bible that Luther began to understand that God is not a God of vengeance but he is a God of care and concern for his children. He is not a God that required penance, flagellations, such as whipping one's self or walking with glass in your shoes. He is a God of mercy.

It is this understand, that God is eager to give good gifts to his children, that he sent his son to die for our sins, and eagerly awaits the salvation of his children that set him on the road to upend the church, then Europe, and then the world.

It was this believe that God freely justified those who believe in him that set him against the teachings of Rome.

At first, the church tried to control Luther. By first pushing him to more theology. And then by sending him on a pilgrimage to Rome.

As the journey had to be made on foot, Luther would stay in the monasteries that they came to as many thousands of pilgrims had before them.

►► But one thing caught his attention. The closer to Rome they got, the more ostentatious the monasteries became. By the time he arrived in Rome, he was totally overwhelmed by the displays of wealth and power, and by the startling lack of simple faith that he observed in the churches and monasteries there, and the disgusting wickedness of the priests.

He returned to Germany with a thoroughly jaded view of the papacy.

The big clash with Rome was just around the corner.

Luther was a pastor/priest. He was teaching people about the love of God, and how love for God in return brought about righteous living.

►► But there was a monk named Tetzel that with his own special brand of lightning was about to light the fuse of the Reformation.

Tetzel was in the business of selling indulgences. ►► The church claimed to have under it's control the mercy of Christ. Therefore the church could dispense this mercy as they saw fit. The church soon realized that this was a valuable commodity, and we would say today, began to monetize it. ►► This was in a large part because St. Peter's cathedral was under construction, and the bank accounts of the Vatican were drawing low.

►► These indulgences were drawn up in a rather ungodly way. They claimed that the pope would release some of God's mercy if you just bought an indulgence. So much money would give you so many days of relief from purgatory.

Luther hit the ceiling when some of his parishioners began buying them. To add fire to fire, Tetzel, in his zeal to raise the money, proclaimed that not only would these indulgences clear you for past sins, it would also clear you for sins that you were going to commit. The story is told, not sure how accurate, that a group purchased these indulgences and then robbed Tetzel of his money, then waived the indulgences in his face.

▶▶ By the way the church is still giving out indulgences.

▶▶ Because of these events, Luther responded with his own lightning and wrote the 95 thesis. These thesis were propositions showing how God's grace was offered freely and the church was not needed to dispense it. Then he nailed them to the door of the Wittenberg church on the night before Halloween .

Meant to lead to a scholarly discussion, the thesis were quickly translated from the Latin of the monastery to the German of the common man, and eventually into French, English, and other languages.

▶▶ When they reached the Vatican, Pope Leo main concern was: "How are these affecting our fundraising?" When told that offerings from Germany were down, Leo decreed that the full fury of the Papacy should descend upon Luther.

▶▶ Leo issued a bull (decree) against Luther, condemning him. The bull said that Luther was fair game for anyone who wanted to kill him. The magistrates of the land were bound by God to see him dead, and so forth.

▶▶ This had been done against Hus and Jerome a hundred years before, and they had both been burned at the stake after they refused to give up their Biblical views.

▶▶ This time Luther made the bonfire. He made a bonfire in the street and burned Leo's bull in front of cheering Germans.

Now it must be understood that Luther never wanted to start a new church. He wanted the church that he had loved from his youth to clean up their act. And it is recognized now as it was then that the Medici Papacy was terribly corrupt.

But the church would not change.

This is where reformation theology and Daniel intersect.

▶▶ As Luther read the book of Daniel, he understood the imagery. It was Luther that believed that the 2 legs of the image of Daniel 2 represented the eastern and western Roman empire.

When he began studying Daniel 7 and 8, it became clear to him that the little horn power was the papacy who inherited the western Roman empire. This power is also known in other scriptures as the antichrist, particularly in Paul's writings and the book of Revelation.

His belief was based on the following things:

▶▶ 1. The little horn came out of the terrible beast. That terrible beast, Luther knew was the Pagan Roman empire. He knew his history well enough to understand the transition from Pagan to Papal Rome.

2. The little horn power would uproot 3 other horns, or powers. Luther knew that the papacy had destroyed 3 peoples, by the way, over their theology.

3. Luther became more and more aware of the blasphemous nature of the papacy. As a theologian, he had to be aware of this.

For instance, from the writings of the papacy we read:

▶▶ At the Fifth Lateran Council (1512) it declared concerning the pope: "Thou art another God on earth." As vicar of the Son of the church has claimed that the pope can modify divine law and claim the subservience of every human creature (see the bull Unam Sanctum).

Or this:

▶▶ Seek where you will, through heaven and earth, and you will find but one created being who can forgive the sinner, who can free him from the chains of hell. That extraordinary being is the priest, the (Roman) Catholic Priest. Yes, beloved brethren, the priest not only declares that the sinner is forgiven, but he really forgives him. The priest raises his hand, he pronounces the word of absolution, and in an instant, quick as a flash of light the chains of hell are burst asunder, and the sinner becomes a child of God. So great is the power of the priest that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decision." - The Catholic Priest, by Fr. Michael Mueller C.S.S.R., Baltimore, Maryland: 1876, Kreuzer Brothers, pp. 78, 79.

And perhaps more disturbing is that the priest in the mass claims to actually create his creator.

▶▶ 4. This little horn power would be a persecuting power. Daniel 7:25 says wear out the saints. Luther was well aware of the burnings of those who stood up against the abuses of the papacy. As a matter of fact, drawings of a goose with Luther circulated. The name of the martyr, Huss, was similar to the word goose in German. This was a warning to Luther that he might face the same fate.

And many millions did face death for daring to believe and teach other than what the church taught..

5. There would be a man at it's head. Daniel 7:8

6. It would be a different power. Church and State.

7. Daniel 7:25, this power would "Think" to change times and laws.

Has this happened?

▶▶ The pope has power to change times, to abrogate laws, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ" Decretal De Translat, Episcop. Cap.

At the Council of Trent the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week by the Catholic Church was urged as evidence that tradition stands above Scripture. Steven Keenean, A Doctrinal Catechism, 3rd American ed., rv. (New York, P. J. Kennedy, 1876), p. 174

►► In the CONVERTS CATECHISM OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE, page 49, we find that God's law has been changed. Exodus 20 contains God's laws. However, the CONVERT'S CATECHISM law has omitted the second commandment and split the tenth in two. No other power on earth has done this.

Keenan 's Doctrinal Catechism says:

Q. Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

A. Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her-she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.

In the CONVERTS CATECHISM OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE, page 50

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (AD 336), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday. Peter Geirmann, C. SS. R., *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, 1957 ed, (St. Louis : B. Herder Book Co., 1930). p 50.

8. There would be 1260 years of Papal supremacy and then it's monopolizing power would be curtailed. Daniel 7:25.

This actually came to pass. In 538 the Pope received political power in the western Roman Empire. That power was unchallenged until the French Revolution, when Napoleon's general Berthier took Pope Pious VI captive to France in the year 1798. He died in captivity a year later.

By the way, before he was taken from Rome, Pious released the Jesuit Superior General, Lorenzi Ricci from prison.

►► 9. And what about that mysterious number 666?

"The title of the Pope of Rome is Vicarius Filii Dei, and if you take the letters of his title which represent Latin numerals (Printed large) and add them together they come to 666." - Our Sunday Visitor,( a publication written by Catholic authorities), Nov. 15, 1914.

What did the leaders of the Reformation have to say?

►► **Martin Luther (1483-1546) (Lutheran):** Based on prophetic studies, Martin Luther finally declared, "We here are of the conviction that the papacy is the seat of the true and real Antichrist." (Aug. 18, 1520). Taken from *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by LeRoy Froom. Vol. 2., pg. 121.

►► **John Calvin (1509-1564) (Presbyterian):** "Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak and whose language we adopt... I shall briefly show that (Paul's words in II Thess. 2) are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy." Taken from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, by John Calvin.

"Daniel and Paul had predicted that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God. The head of that cursed and abominable kingdom, in the Western Church, we affirm to be the Pope." - John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, pp. 314-15.

►► **Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) (Anglican):** "Whereof it followeth Rome to be the seat of antichrist, and the pope to be very antichrist himself. I could prove the same by many other scriptures, old writers, and strong reasons." (Referring to prophecies in Revelation and Daniel.) *Works by Cranmer*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

►► **Roger Williams (1603-1683) (First Baptist Pastor in America):** Pastor Williams spoke of the Pope as "the pretended Vicar of Christ on earth, who sits as God over the Temple of God, exalting himself not only above all that is called God, but over the souls and consciences of all his vassals, yea over the Spirit of Christ, ►► over the Holy Spirit, yea, and God himself...speaking against the God of heaven, thinking to change times and laws; but he is the son of perdition (II Thess. 2)." *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by Froom, Vol. 3, pg. 52.

►► **John Wesley (1703-1791) (Methodist):** Speaking of the Papacy, John Wesley wrote, "He is in an emphatical sense, the Man of Sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled the Son of Perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, ►► both of his opposers and followers... He it is...that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped...claiming the highest power, and highest honour...claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone." *Antichrist and His Ten Kingdoms*, by John Wesley, pg. 110.

So the Reformers were together in their belief that the papacy was the little horn power, etc.

►► Now during the Reformation this interpretation of prophecy began to gain a lot of traction. Many of the priests were biblical illiterates. Their parishioner could point to the Bible and say to their priests, "Hey, what do you think about that?" When they could not get an answer, many became Protestant.

Protestant Reformation doctrines on Antichrist were held by hundreds of thousands of people, as well as kings and rulers. Under these Protestant doctrines, whole nations rebelled against allegiance to the pope.

It began to look like it might all be over for the Papacy. So the Papacy endeavored to divert the Protestant accusations by a twofold interpretation.

So what did the church do about it?

►► About this time, a new society was formed by Ignatius of Loyola, called the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits as they are commonly known.

The Jesuit order was formed specifically for the purpose of defeating Protestantism, whether by the inquisition, infiltration, or false beliefs.

They formed schools around the world for the purpose of turning out students who would support the agenda for the papacy around the world.

Just one example I will cite is Georgetown University. Stop and think how many of our leaders trained there. How many times major seminars for the government are held there. And their shameless willingness to cover up Jesus when they hold their fetes.

But I digress.

There were 2 Jesuit scholars who undertook the main task of deflecting the charges that Protestantism was placing against them.

►► **Luis del Alcázar** (Ludovicus ab Alcasar, Louis of Alcazar) (1554–1613) was a Spanish Jesuit theologian.

He is known for his *Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi* (1614) published after his death, putting forward what would later be called a preterist view of Biblical prophecy, in commentary on the *Book of Revelation*; his work is regarded as the first major application of the method of interpretation of prophecy by reading in terms of the author's contemporary concerns. His view was that everything in the Apocalypse, apart from the three final chapters, refers to events that already have come to pass.

The desired effect was to teach that most of Revelation and Daniel had already happened, therefore the Papacy could not be the antichrist.

Preterism has several villains, among them Nero and, most of all, Antiochus Epiphanies.

Whew!! The antichrist cannot be the papacy!!!

►► **Francisco Ribera** published his 500-page commentary on Revelation around 1590. He assigned the first three chapters of Revelation to ancient Rome. The rest of Revelation he restricted to a literal 3-1/2 year reign of an infidel Antichrist man who would oppose and blaspheme the saints just before the second advent. Ribera taught that Antichrist would be a literal man who would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, abolish the Christian religion, deny Christ, be received by the Jews, pretend to be God, and conquer the world.

In this way, a second way of deflecting prophecy from the papacy came about. If everything were in the future, then the church was off the hook.

The antichrist becomes a power in the future just before the coming of Christ. Therefore it cannot be the medieval papacy.

Dodged the bullet again.

►► Protestant scholars of that time were not deceived.

Isaac Newton taught that: "Through a collaboration of Jesuits Francisco Ribera of Spain and Robert Bellarmine of Rome, the Papacy put forward its counter interpretation, Futurism. The Pope was not AntiChrist they contended for he was not to appear until "in the future". Their new interpretation was published in 1591 – three years after the defeat of the Spanish Armada when all hope of crushing Protestantism was gone. Luis de Alcazar published the contradictory Preterist interpretation in 1614. He argued that the AntiChrist had come and gone before the book of Revelation was written."

Or course the interpretation was applied to Daniel as well. Particularly chapter 9.

So we have Catholic theologians developing conflicting theories about prophecy to hide from the very clear teaching of scripture that the papacy is an antichrist power. And opposing the clear teaching of prophecy, as understood for ages, that undergirded Protestantism.

This two prong approach, developed by Jesuit scholars for the specific purpose of stopping the Protestant Reformation was very effective. It kept the reformation out of Spain, Italy, and most of France, and cut into the growth of the reformation elsewhere.

And it is still going.

Most interpretation of prophecy now is a direct descendent of Counter-Reformation Jesuit theology. And this theology has taken Jesus Christ out of one of the most important passages in the book of Daniel. We will see that Friday night. And there are many more doctrinal ramifications, which we cannot touch on tonight.

Again, one or the other of these is the view of most of Protestantism today. In reality, there is not much of Protestantism left today. The ecumenical movement has essentially watered down doctrine to the point where most people do not know what their church believes, nor do they know what they believe. Few read their Bibles, and fewer are really interested in anything that requires commitment.

We now have the first Jesuit pope, who is spending a lot of time telling people that those things they believe as Catholics are not so important after all.

►► Here is a picture that says it all. This is in the chapel of the main Jesuit college in Rome, just a couple of blocks from the Pantheon, that shrine to pagan gods, which by the way, have all been given the names of saints. You cannot read the inscriptions as they are too far away, but this statue is showing Ignatius Loyola holding up a papal document, with his foot on the neck of Martin Luther. In essence, this statue is declaring Jesuit victory over the Reformation.

I wonder what Luther would say to that?

Having said that, there are some who are still Protestants. Some Lutherans have bucked the trend to go back to the mother church. There are some Presbyterians who

strongly hold the views of the Reformation. There are others here and there who remain faithful to the Bible.

I hope that you see the teachings in this seminar as solid Reformation theology.

So, in spite of teachings meant to lead people from Christ, the Bible speaks of a remnant who are faithful him, because they love him more than anything else. These people will not follow the false doctrine of the beast/antichrist power.

That is what we must take away from this.

►► Revelation 15:1-4 (KJV)

<sup>1</sup> And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

<sup>2</sup> And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

<sup>3</sup> And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

<sup>4</sup> Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

God is calling those who are faithful to his word to remain strong. He is still calling for Protestants, people who will protest the evils and sins of the world. He still calls them. And when they answer, He will help them be victorious. Because they love him, and he loves them.

Do you want to be among that group?

Our Gospel text is:

►► **1 Corinthians 16:13**

<sup>13</sup> Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.