

## Lesson Three

# The Tree of Power & Its Roots

Stormy Seasons: The Influence of “July” and “August”  
Rome: A Center of Power vs Christ: The Center of History  
The Ain’ts Ain’t Saints

### 1)

The “holy kiss” was the formal greeting among Greek converts which emphasized that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek; bond nor free; male nor female. The New Testament law was the Law of Christ—the Law of Love ... and love is the bond of perfectness which recognizes the saints of God as being those \_\_\_\_\_.

### Map of Asia Minor (Turkey)

Asia Minor—including Greece and Italy.

- Alexander the Great embarked on a campaign against the Persians in 334 BC crossing the Dardanelles, occupying Gordium to defeat King Darius III. This is where the cutting of the fabled Gordian knot took place.
- Constantinople is called Istanbul, Turkey today.

### 2)

Over \_\_\_\_\_ of all the New Testament events happened in Asia Minor—present day Turkey:

- Note that all 7 churches of Revelation are located in Turkey—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
- Paul the Apostle was born near Syria in Tarsus of Asia Minor.
- The Early Church had its center in Ephesus.
- Greek disciples of Jesus were first called Christians in Antioch. Keep in mind that there are 2 Antiochs—One in Syria and one in Asia Minor.
- After Christ’s resurrection, many Christians escaped from persecution in Jerusalem by going to various cities in Asia Minor.
- The Apostle Paul preached in Perge, Derbe, Lystra, Antioch, and Ephesus.
- It is believed that the Apostle John with Mary, the mother of Jesus, stayed in Ephesus and, after his return from exile on Patmos, died there.
- Patmos is the small island in the Aegean Sea.
- Philip settled in Hierapolis being killed there with his family by the Romans.

### 3)

One date which is commonly proposed as marking the transition from Republic to Empire is when the Roman Senate granted to Octavian the title “Augustus Caesar” just 27 years before the birth of Christ—\_\_\_\_\_.

### The Zenith of the Roman Empire

From the time of Augustus to the Fall of the Western Empire, Rome’s dominion covered territory surrounding the Mediterranean Sea; the northern coast of Africa and Egypt., and even into England and Wales.

The empire reached its zenith under Emperor Trajan in 117 AD, just 17 years after the death of the Apostle John around 100 AD.

Christ's resurrection occurred at a precise time in history; preached by human agents; within precise windows of opportunity; through the precise power of the Holy Spirit; in spite of the might of the most powerful empire the world had yet known.

At that time, the empire territories covered an area almost as big as Australia.

Its end is placed at 305 AD under Diocletian—the last emperor of an undivided Empire.

But before retiring, Diocletian did divide the empire into East and West—

### **Julius Caesar**

You'll remember his assassin, Marcus Brutus,

Although Brutus's name meant "immovable,"— It later came to mean *brutal* or "You brute!"

- After the assassination, the Senate rewarded Brutus with a proconsular command in the Balkans.
- However, as was characteristic of Rome, the matter was settled by force at a battle at Philippi by two well known characters, Octavian (soon to be called Augustus Caesar) and Mark Anthony.
- They cornered Brutus and he committed suicide.

#### **4)**

- Two years after his assassination, the Roman Senate officially proclaimed Julius Caesar as one of the Roman deities. They \_\_\_\_\_ Julius Caesar.

In 64 AD the Apostle Paul wrote to the Phillipians from his Roman prison —  
Phillipians 4:19-23—

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute **every saint** in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. **All the saints** salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

#### **5)**

J. Vernon McGee:

"The human family is divided into two groups: the saints and the ain'ts. Saints are believers in Christ. They are saints, not because of their conduct, but because of their position *in Christ*. ... If you ain't a saint, then you are an ain't ... I believe the little phrase \_\_\_\_\_ comprises the most important words that we have in the New Testament."

Extract from a PBS broadcast:

“Perhaps no one else could identify more with suffering than the nun that John Paul would *fast-track toward sainthood*, Mother Teresa. Her feelings of being abandoned by God would eventually reach the stage of world media. But to some of the faithful, that news would make her only more worthy of adoration...I think [that John Paul and Mother Teresa] recognized in one another—Saints.”

“On October 20th, 2003, Pope John Paul II officially **beatified** Mother Teresa—*Beatification is the first step toward sainthood*. It allows the church to begin the examination of the candidate’s holy virtues in life and confirms two reported miracles after death — both necessary for canonization.”

“Less than two years later ... John Paul would also leave his mortal body behind...At the mass for him...many people were crying out, “Saint [him] right away!”

“The Catholic Church is considering whether or not to make Mother Teresa a saint and ... letters were collected as supporting materials for the process”

—End of transcription

Beginning in the 10th century, the Roman Church asserted that no one could be venerated as a saint without its approval. The first recorded canonization of a saint was Ulrich of Augsburg by Pope John XV in 993 AD.

Acts 5:14-16

“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and *laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.*”

Acts 19:11,12

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.”

Roman Catholics believe to venerate a “canonized saint” is to deepen their relationship with Christ.

Quoting from a Catholic source—

“The Most Holy Mother of God came to be honoured not only as a Saint (for She is truly the “Saint of Saints”), but, even more importantly, as a crucial aspect of the very Incarnation of God.”

Later, the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, entrusted with the responsibility to pray for everyone, were honored as Saints after their deaths in the belief that they would continue as intercessors from Heaven.

According to Roman Catholic law, the primary purpose of canonization is to officially authorize veneration and intercession of a particular saint.

The investigation process determines that:

1. The saint's name is added to the catalogue of saints
2. The saint is invoked in public prayers
3. Churches may be dedicated in the saint's memory
4. The Mass can be offered in the saint's honor
5. Feast days are celebrated in the saint's memory
6. Images of the saint are made in which his or her head is surrounded by a halo
7. The saint's relics or body is enclosed in a vessel for public honored

A "true saint" must perform miracles *after his or her death*, proving that that person is a miracle working saint and is in heaven.

Listed are some of the phenomena investigated as *miracles after death of a "true saint"*.

- Healings attributed to intercession of the saint or contact with relics.
- Incorruptibility – the saint's body does not decay after a long period in the grave.
- Liquefaction – the dried blood of the saint liquefies every year on the day of his or her death.
- Odor of sanctity – body exudes a sweet aroma instead of the normal stench of decay.

And here are *miracles during the life of true saints* that have been reported:

- Levitation
- Stigmata – the saint's body exhibits five wounds of Christ, which usually bleed during Mass.
- Bilocation – the saint reportedly appeared in two places at once.

**6)**

Usually between \_\_\_\_\_ after death, a formal request is made for a person to be recognized as a true saint. And there are 9 processes for becoming a saint. Two of which stood out from the others —

- 7)**
- If any miracles are reported which qualify the person for beatification or canonization, the Prefect presents the cause to the pope to decide. Canonization is considered a function of \_\_\_\_\_, as it is important that believers venerate and pray to only those who are actually in heaven.
  - Finally, the pope declares "sainthood" at a special mass, and the person is officially recognized as blessed or as a saint and a large tapestry with an image of the saint is unfurled before the faithful to venerate.

Regarding the Catholic succession of popes: The title, Pope, is from the Latin *papa* or Greek *papas*, meaning "father".

Matthew 23:5-13—

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; **and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.** Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ...”

*Vicar of Christ and Petrine primacy*—or “first after Peter” among the bishops.

- Early bishops occupying the See of Rome were designated “Vicar of Peter”.
- Later popes were given the more authoritative “Vicar of Christ”
- This designation was first used in 495 of Pope Gelasius I, an advocate of papal supremacy.
- The current pope is Pope Benedict XVI — the 265th pope in their successions
- Each believed to be infallible—Well, pretty much infallible.
- In the mid-11th century Roman Catholic system, we come across papal elections in which problems of historical and theological criteria make it impossible to decide clearly who would legitimately qualify as the unbroken lawful successor of Saint Peter.
- It seems the uncertainty makes it advisable to abandon the belief that any pope is or has ever been a direct ascendant from the Apostle Peter. And it causes one to wonder what the definition of the word infallible really means.

One degree off Peter’s confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God” combined with the deception of Satan, has resulted in what we find in the Roman Catholic religion today—The “Holy See” isn’t holy and it cannot see.

## **Herod the Great**

We know him for the Massacre of the Innocents in Bethlehem, described in Matthew, chapter 2.

- He was born 65 or so years before the birth of Jesus.
- In 43 BC, Herod’s father was poisoned following the chaos caused because his father offered financial support to Julius Caesar’s murderers.
- Herod, backed by the Roman Army, tracked down and executed the assassin.
- Afterwards, Antigonus tried to take the throne from his uncle. Herod defeated him and then married his teenage niece, Mariamne, which helped to secure him a claim to the throne in Judea and gain some Jewish favor.
- However, Herod already had a wife and a three year old son which he banished.
- In 42 BC, he succeeded in convincing Mark Antony and Octavian (August

Caesar) that his father had been forced to help Caesar's murderers. He was then named tetrarch of Galilee by the Romans.

Herod the Great's most famous and ambitious project was the expansion of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the eighteenth year of his reign—around 20 B.C.

8)

- The finished temple, which was destroyed in 70 AD, is often referred to as Herod's Temple rather than the Temple of the Lord. God's glory did not dwell there. But God Himself entered there to cleanse it \_\_\_\_\_.
- The plan of God would be that the Holy Spirit would dwell only in sanctified Temples—in those set apart through the Death & Resurrection of Christ.

Jesus cleansed the temple 2 times. The first, at the beginning of His ministry just days following His first miracle at the wedding at Cana. (John 2:13-22)

9)

John 2:20 gives a very accurate statement revealing when this occurred—  
"Then the Jews said, "It has taken \_\_\_\_\_ to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

- Herod the Great undertook a massive expansion and beautification of the temple in 20 BC—so it was now the year 26 AD—46 years into the restoration project.

The **second cleansing** occurred near the end of His ministry immediately following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:45-47).

This is very significant—

- Jesus knew that the acclaim of the people would be short-lived. They were blind to the true nature of His kingdom and would reject Him. Many in churches today are in that same condition.
- The fierce judgment of God upon Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple may be a type of the future judgment upon the "foolish Virgins" when the Bridegroom returns after His long absence.

Josephus wrote that Herod the Great died in 4 BC.

Listed are some of the notable facts about the ignoble king—

35 BC — Aristobulus III of Judea is drowned on Herod's orders.

31 BC — Octavian defeats Mark Antony, so Herod switches allegiance to Octavian.

30 BC — Herod is shown great favour by Octavian, who confirms him as King of Judaea.

29 BC — Herod had great jealousy concerning his wife and executed her.

Alexandra declared herself Queen. Herod executed her without trial.

28 BC — Herod executed his brother-in-law Kostobar for conspiracy.

20 BC — Expansion started on the Second Temple.

- 13 BC — The newly expanded temple in Jerusalem was inaugurated..  
Herod fell into disgrace with Augustus. Herod again suspected Alexander of plotting to kill him.
- 8 BC — Herod accused his grandsons from Mariamne I of high treason.
- 7 BC — Mariamne I's sons were found guilty and executed.
- 6 BC — Herod proceeded against the Pharisees, who had announced that the birth of the Messiah would mean the end of his rule.
- 5 BC — Antipater was brought before the court and charged with the intended murder of Herod. Herod, by now seriously ill, named his son Herod Antipas (from his fourth wife) as his successor. Augustus approved the death penalty for Antipater. Herod then executed his son.

Acts 12:1, introduces Herod the Great's grandson, Herod Agrippa I —

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church." The word "vex" falls far short in describing what this grandson of Herod the Great was willing to do. The persecution of Christ's body now swings from the religious to the political arena—

—Luke 12:29-35—

"... seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, *neither be ye of doubtful mind*. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning..."

In just a few days we celebrate the coming of our Savior into the world which He created— He created it and pronounced it "Good".

Good only remains when God reigns.