

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ



# The Seven Letters of Jesus



# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local

Ch 1:11

“write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches”

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local
- Personal

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local
- Personal

Rev 2:7

He that hath an ear.....,

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local
- Personal
- Message to all Churches



# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local
- Personal
- Message to all Churches

Rev 2:7

“let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches”

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local
- Personal
- Message to all Churches
- Prophetic – 7 church ages

# Letters to the Churches

*Four levels of meaning*

- Local
- Personal
- Message to all Churches
- Prophetic – 7 church ages

Rev 1:3

“.....the words of this prophecy”

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Chapter 2

*The Letter to the Church at Pergamos*

Verses 12-17



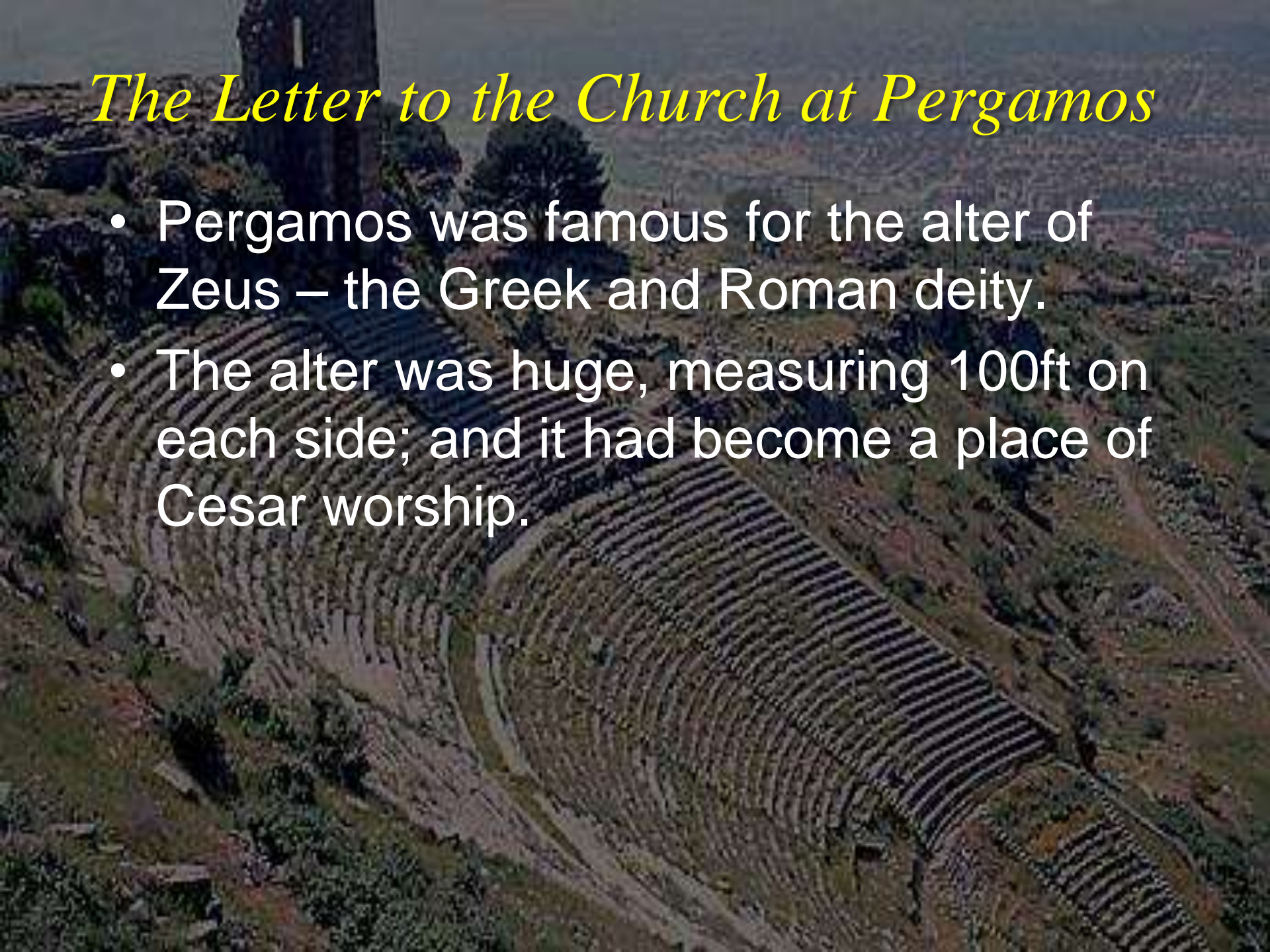
# *The Letter to the Church at Pergamos*

- Pergamos was situated about 50 miles north of Smyrna and about 15 miles inland off the Aegean Sea.
- The city was given over to idolatry and worshipped many pagan gods.
- There was an Acropolis on top of the hill along with an amphitheatre that could seat 10,000 people.



# *The Letter to the Church at Pergamos*

- Pergamos was famous for the alter of Zeus – the Greek and Roman deity.
- The alter was huge, measuring 100ft on each side; and it had become a place of Cesar worship.





# *The Letter to the Church at Pergamos*

- Asclepius the serpent god was also worshipped and it was believed that he had power to heal.
- This was a distortion of the account recorded in Numbers 21

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;  
These things saith he which hath the sharp sword  
with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even  
where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name,  
and hast not denied my faith, even in those days  
wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was  
slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

**Revelation 2:12-13**



14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

**Revelation 2:14-15**

- 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
- 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

**Revelation 2:16-17**



# The Prophetic History of The Church

PERGAMOS  
'mixed marriage'

3<sup>rd</sup> Church Age - The 'Constantine Church'  
313 AD - 590 AD

'Mustard Seed'  
(Cf. Matt 13:31-32)



# Israel

Espousal Jer 2:1-2  
38 years Deut 2:14



Victory through time of war  
cf: Promised Land



Complacency brings defeat Prov 29:18  
Time of the Judges / Embracing the world

*“And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out”  
Then the Angel of the LORD... said...you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' “  
Judges 1:28, 2:1-3*



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- During this period of history, the Roman Empire was divided into two sections.
- Constantine, in a bid for total control entered into a war with Maximus.
- Just before a battle at Milvian Bridge, legend has it that Constantine looked up and saw a flaming cross in the sky and heard a voice saying 'in this sign conquer'.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- He then went out and won the battle and was so impressed that he 'converted' to Christianity.
- This brought about a dramatic change that has affected the world ever since.
- One day the Christians are being fed to the lions, the next day Christians are given equal rights and even given their land and property back.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

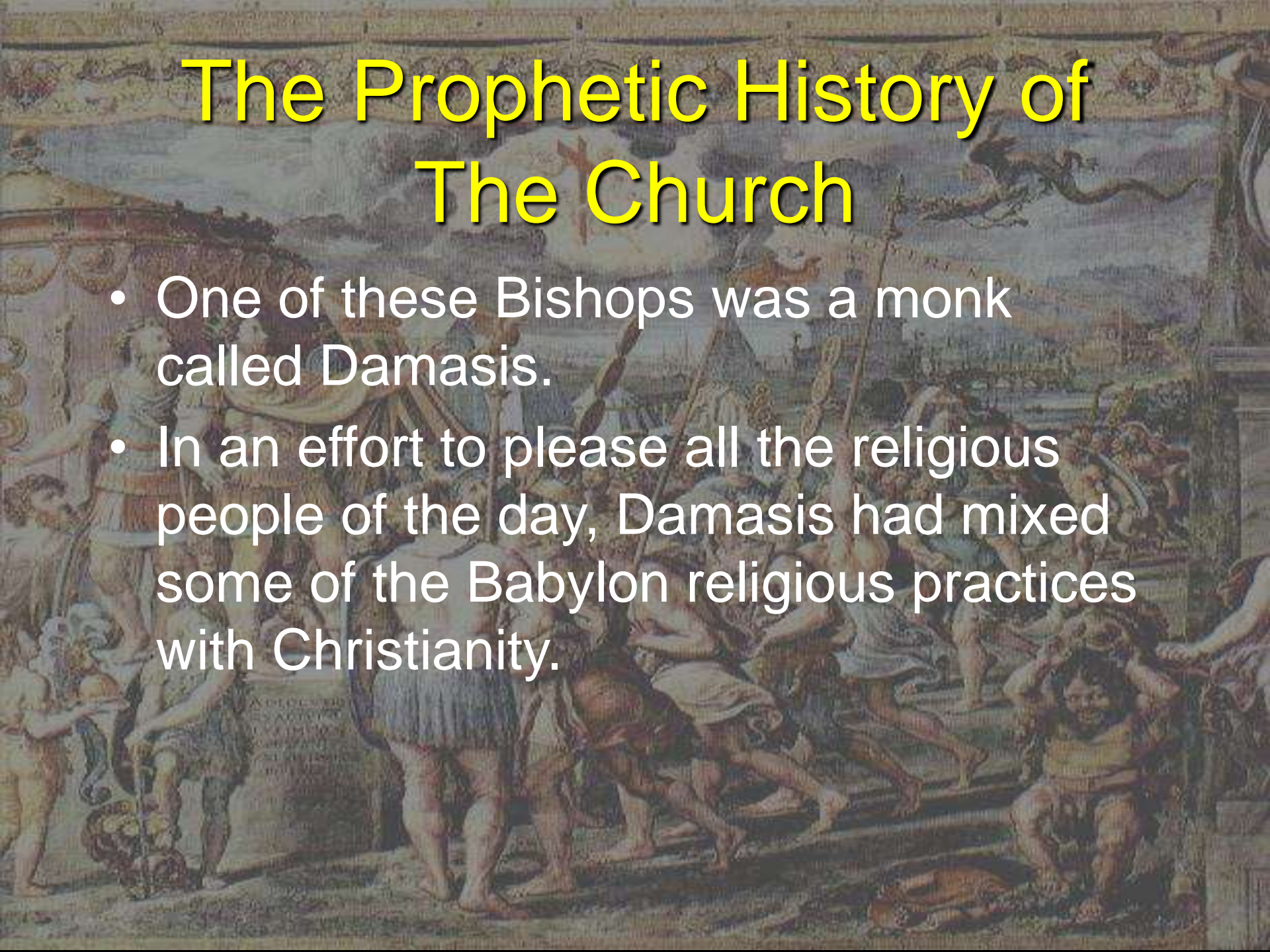
- According to historians, Constantine then invited Christian Bishops from all over the area to come to Rome to talk about this new 'faith'.





# The Prophetic History of The Church

- One of these Bishops was a monk called Damasis.
- In an effort to please all the religious people of the day, Damasis had mixed some of the Babylon religious practices with Christianity.





# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Constantine was impressed with Damasis' ability to please 'everybody' so gave Damasis the position of 'Bishop of Rome' and the title of 'Supreme Pontiff'
  - which up until that point had only been used by Emperors.
  - This title is still used today by the head of the Roman Catholic Church.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Constantine also set up a basilica and had 13 sarcophaguses (tombs) placed within it.
- His intention was to bring the bodies of the 12 Apostles to Rome, and lay them to rest in this basilica.
- The 13<sup>th</sup> place was intended to be for himself when he died.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- The Catholic Church, as it became known had 5 major centres.
  - Antioch / Byzantium (later to be renamed Constantinople – and now known as Istanbul) / Jerusalem –
- These three were in the east of the empire.
- The other two were..
  - Alexandria, in Egypt, and Rome – both in the west of the empire.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Constantine, named the church in Rome the '**Roman Catholic Church**'.
- However, being concerned that the church at Rome was going off on a tangent (supported very much by those within the church in Alexandria, Egypt), the churches in the East named their churches 'Orthodox' meaning the original, or authentic.
  - This is the root of Greek, Russian & Eastern Orthodox



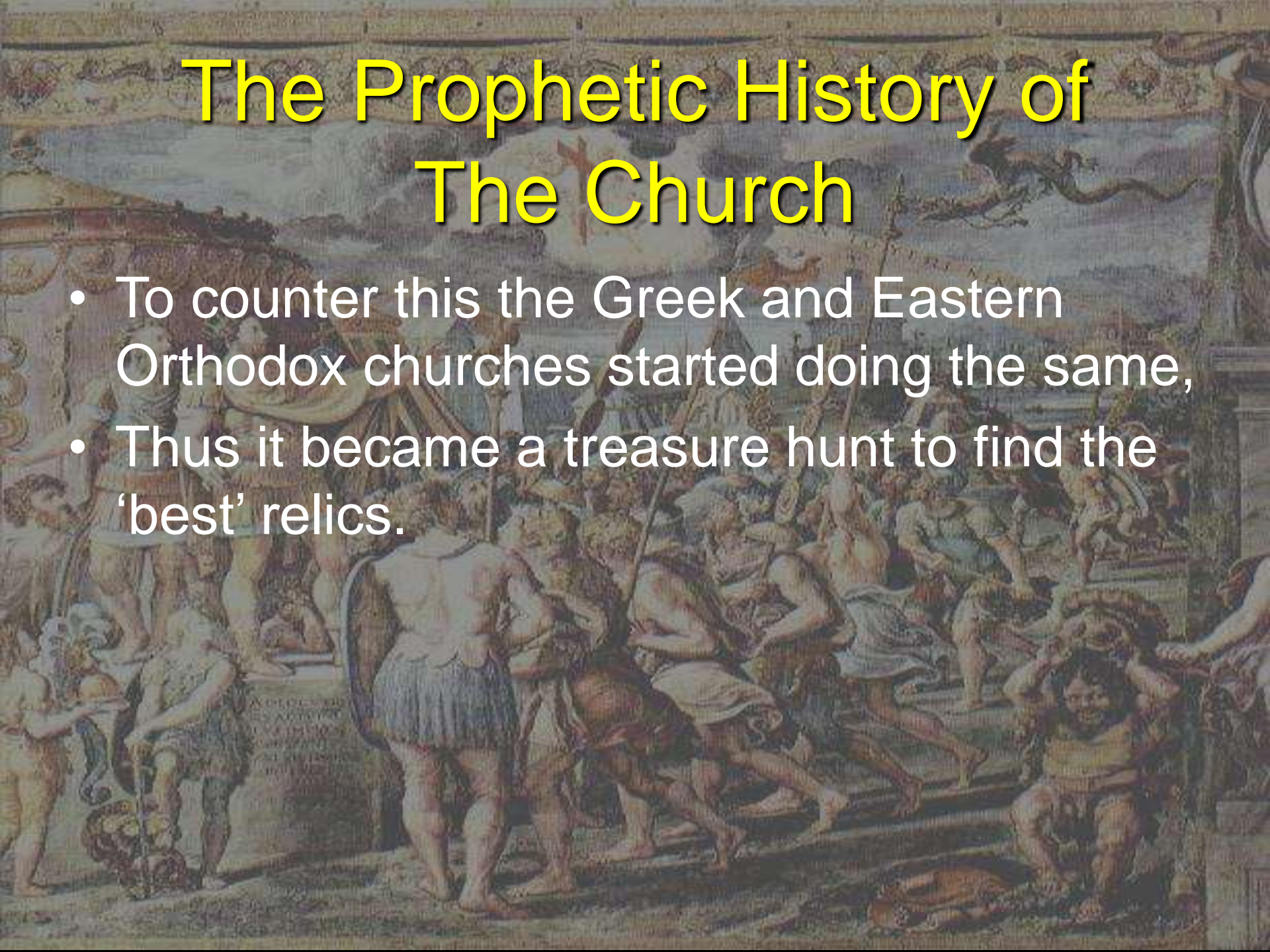
# The Prophetic History of The Church

- The rivalry grew and before long the Roman Catholic Church started to collect 'relics' in an attempt to prove that they were the most authentic.
  - (Relics are artefacts, or things that belonged to, were worn, or had some connection with Jesus or the 12 Apostles or other key early church figures).
- The Roman Catholic Church then started telling people that they had the 'best' relics, so they must be the true church.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- To counter this the Greek and Eastern Orthodox churches started doing the same,
- Thus it became a treasure hunt to find the 'best' relics.





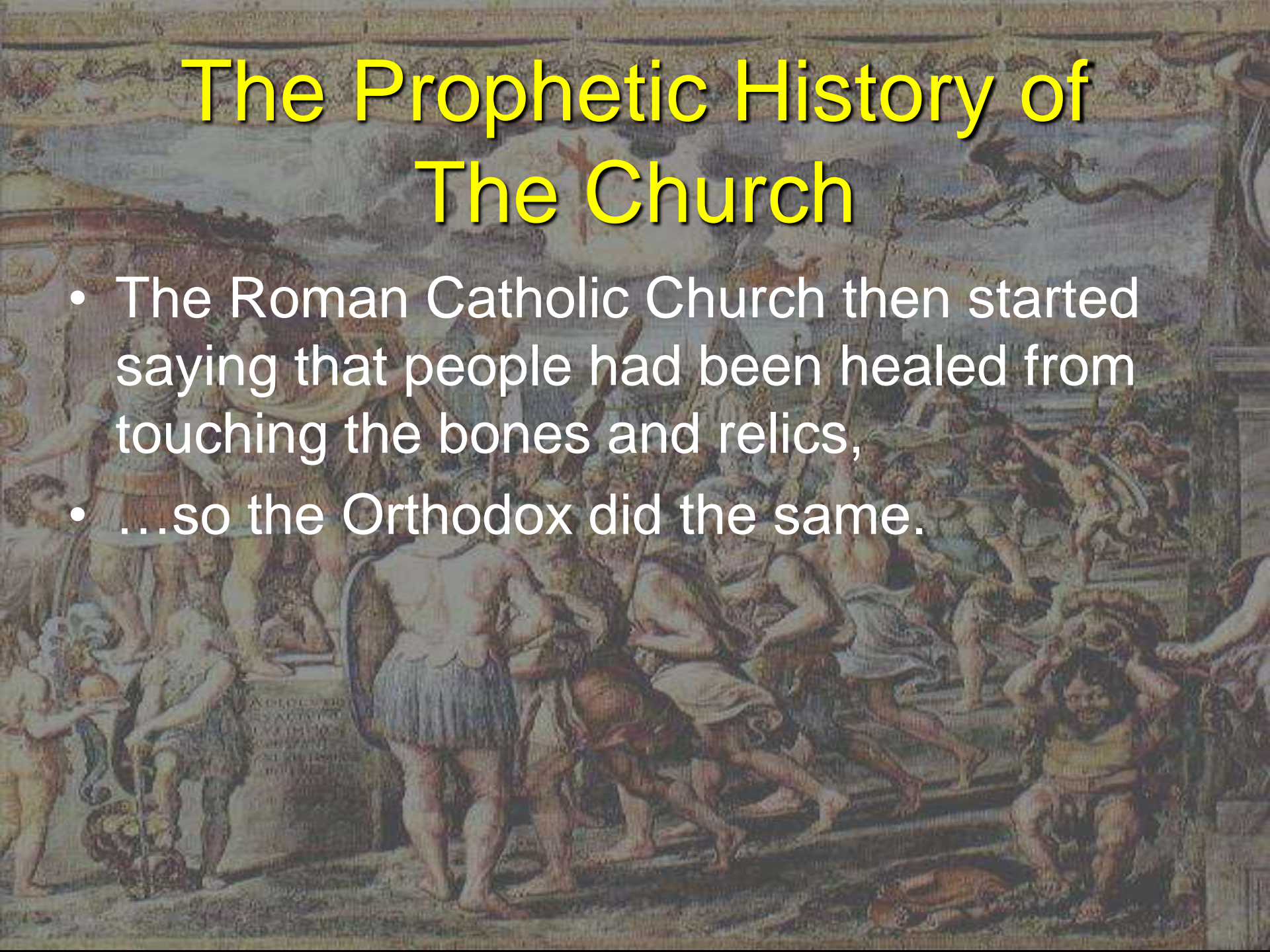
# The Prophetic History of The Church

- To underline the madness of this, until recently the Roman Catholic Church had the body of James...
- ...but the Eastern Orthodox had his head!
- In a 'gesture of good will' the Eastern Orthodox church gave the head to the Roman Catholic Church
- James can now be put back together again!



# The Prophetic History of The Church

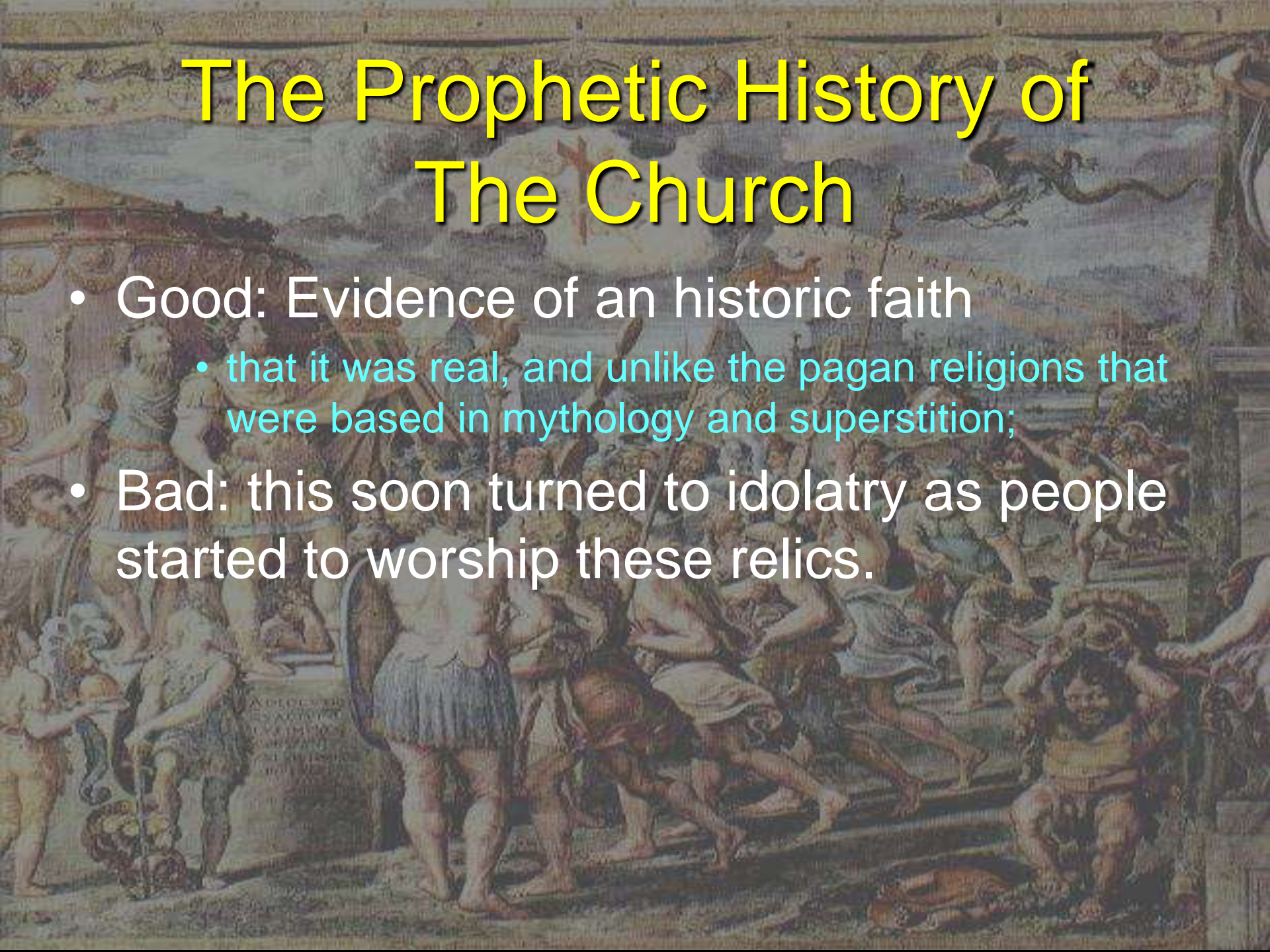
- The Roman Catholic Church then started saying that people had been healed from touching the bones and relics,
- ...so the Orthodox did the same.





# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Good: Evidence of an historic faith
  - that it was real, and unlike the pagan religions that were based in mythology and superstition;
- Bad: this soon turned to idolatry as people started to worship these relics.





# The Prophetic History of The Church

- One of the other major problems at this time was that the whole theology of the church shifted.
- For years the church had been persecuted and in fear of death,
  - eagerly looking for the return of the Lord, holding to the blessed hope!
- Now, overnight, the persecution had stopped



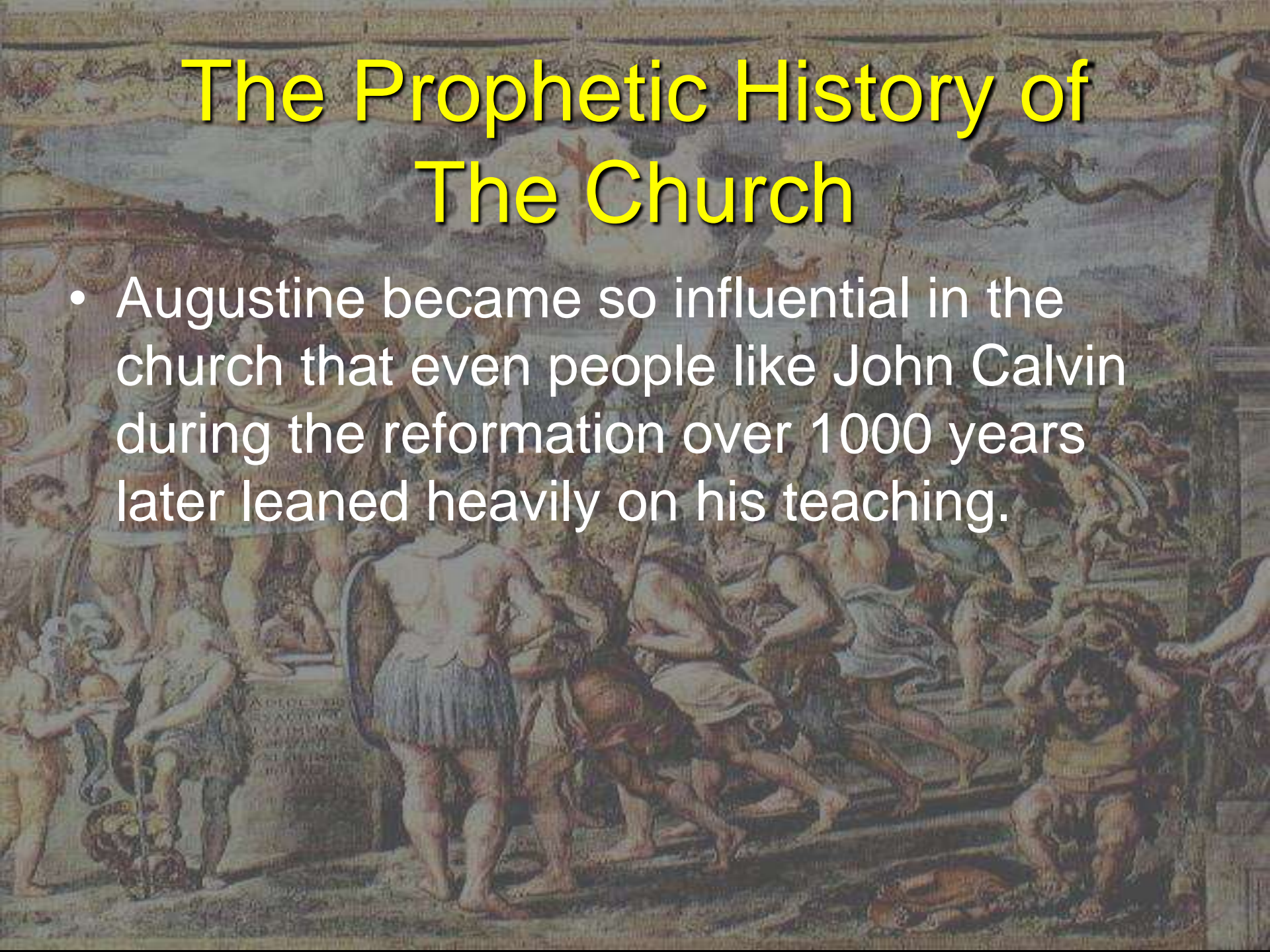
# The Prophetic History of The Church

- This led to the thinking that maybe all the persecution had been the tribulation(?).
- If that was so, then this must now be the Millennium(?).
- This idea went hand in hand with the allegorisation of Scripture
- ...largely promoted by a man call Origen,
  - and later by one of his pupils called Augustine of Hippo.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Augustine became so influential in the church that even people like John Calvin during the reformation over 1000 years later leaned heavily on his teaching.





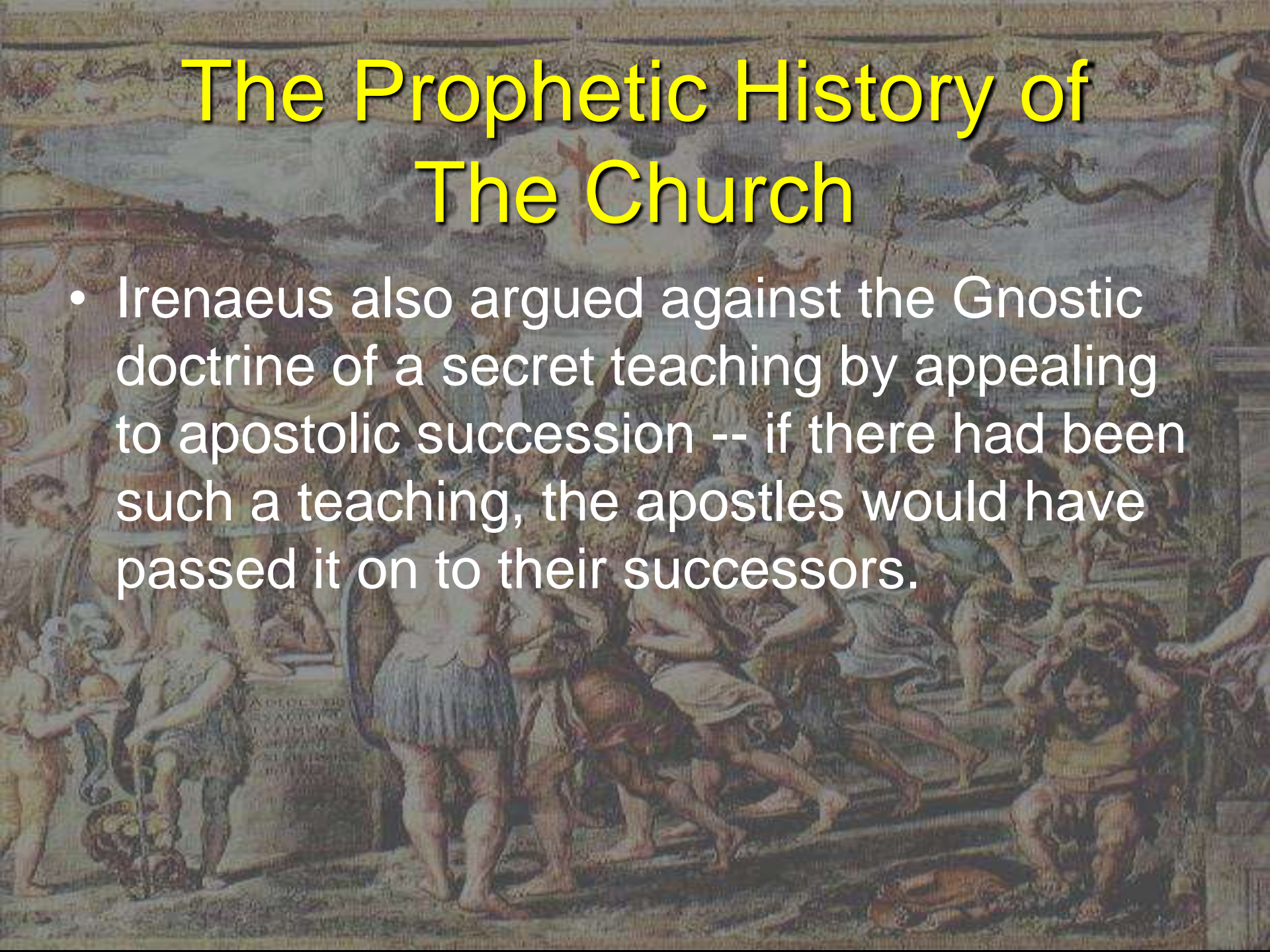
# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Irenaeus, a pupil of Polycarp...
  - who in turn was a disciple of John the Apostle,
- ...became the Bishop of Lyons in France.
- Irenaeus, like Justin Martyr (an early Christian historian), believed that Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years
- He vehemently protested against attempts to allegorize away the Millennial reign of Christ



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Irenaeus also argued against the Gnostic doctrine of a secret teaching by appealing to apostolic succession -- if there had been such a teaching, the apostles would have passed it on to their successors.





# The Prophetic History of The Church

- However, Augustine...
  - realising that it was unpopular to teach that Jesus was coming back to usurp the rulers of this world,
  - - the same rulers that had just 'legalised' Christianity
- ...popularised the Gnostic teachings from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century that scripture, and particularly the Book of Revelation, were to be taken symbolically, not literally.



# The Prophetic History of The Church

- Hence the church shifted form looking for the imminent return of the Lord to deliver them, to believing that the kingdom had now come and was being manifested on earth through the church.
- This is still the view taught in Roman Catholic and most Anglican / Protestant churches today.



# The Letter to the Church at Pergamos

- The name 'Pergamos' means mixed or elevated marriage.
  - Pergos – berg (German) = castle or something that is lifted up.
  - Gammos – marriage (as in polygamy, monogamy etc.)



# The Letter to the Church at Pergamos

- The church had become elevated through its marriage to Rome,
- Now the influences of the pagan religions had come under its roof.
- One day, the pagan priests were worshipping their idols in their temples...
- ...the next, they are told that they must convert to Christianity or die.
- The church, so long the oppressed, suddenly became the oppressor with its newly found political power.



# The Letter to the Church at Pergamos

- The Christians then started to use the lavish pagan temples and turn them into 'churches'.
- As more churches began to be built, they were modelled on the existing pagan temples, but also began to become even more elaborate.
- This was good news for architecture but bad for true Christianity!



# The Letter to the Church at Pergamos

- Now the buildings themselves became the focus;
  - a practice that persists even to this day.
- It is because of this that so many people associate 'church' with a building and not with the people who have left all to follow Jesus Christ.



# The Letter to the Church at Pergamos

- All in all, this was one of the worst times in the history of the Church, far from setting their minds on heavenly things, the Church had embraced the world and allowed countless compromises, including the watering down of the Word of God.

# Heptadic Design

- 7 Kingdom parables

Sower	Wheat & Tares	Mustard Seed	Leaven	Hidden Treasure	Pearl of great price	Dragnet
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- 7 Letters to the churches

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
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- 7 Ages of the church

Early Church 32-100AD	Age of persecution 100 – 313AD	Marriage to the world 313 - 590AD	Age of the Papacy 590AD – Tribulation	Age of the Reformation 1517AD - Tribulation	Age of Revival 1750AD – Rapture	Age of compromise 1900 - Tribulation
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- 7 churches written to by Paul

Ephesians	Philippines	Corinthians	Galatians	Romans	Thessalonians	Colossians
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# The Parable of the Mustard Seed

- 31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:
- 32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

**Matthew 13:31-32**





# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Chapter 2

*The Letter to the Church at Pergamos*

Verses 12-17

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;  
These things saith he which hath the sharp sword  
with two edges;

**Revelation 2:12**

Sadly, in Pergamos, as with so many churches today, the pastor had let the influence of the world permeate the church. It is therefore no surprise that the characteristic of Jesus drawn from chapter one that Jesus uses in the introduction to this letter is the image of Himself with the two-edged. The two-edged sword is symbol of **the** word of God (Heb 4:12). This was the very thing this church were moving away from.



13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

### **Revelation 2:13**

“Where thou dwellest.” The Lord commends this church ...He takes note of their circumstances. He knew that these believers were living in a very difficult place. And, my friend, the Lord takes note of our circumstances. Sometimes we are inclined to condemn someone who is caught in a certain set of circumstances, but if we were in the same position, we might act in an even worse way than he is acting. (J V McGee)

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

**Revelation 2:13**

Satan had persecuted the Church from the outside, but this had only made the Church stronger. So now he switches tactics and introduces the world into the church. Pergamos was overflowing with idolatry and pagan religious practices. So this place became the center of Satan's operations.



13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

**Revelation 2:13**

In the midst of all of this compromise, the Church at Pergamos are commended for holding fast Jesus' name and not denying the faith. Although much of the so-called church was shifting away from the truth, the true church was still standing. However, it was during this time that Arius, a theologian, built on the teaching of the Gnostics and taught that Jesus was not God, he was the son of God, but not God. Alexander of Alexandria led the move to depose Arius and those who had joined him. This led to the council of Nicaea

# The Nicaea Creed

*"We believe in One God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible:"- "And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Only-begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, Very God from Very God, begotten not made, One in essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and cometh to judge quick and dead." "And in the Holy Ghost."*



# The Nicaea Creed

*"And those who say, 'Once He was not,' and 'Before His generation He was not,' and 'He came to be from nothing,' or those who pretend that the Son of God is 'Of other subsistence or essence ,' or 'created' or 'alterable,' or 'mutable,' the Catholic Church anathematizes."*

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

**Revelation 2:13**



14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there **them that hold the doctrine** of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

**Revelation 2:14-15**

Doctrine is mentioned **45 times** in the New Testament.

Anything mentioned that many times is worthy of our attention. Some people say that we should not insist on doctrine because it causes division. But this is exactly why we must 'hold fast' to the apostles doctrine (1 Tim 4:16 / 2 John 1:9)

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

**Revelation 2:14-15**

The Devil could not bring Israel down from the outside, so he did from the inside. He could not bring the church down through persecution, so he did it from within by infiltrating the church with pagan and Gnostic teaching.



# “The doctrine of Balaam”

“The doctrine of Balaam” is different from the error of Balaam (see Jude 11), which revealed that Balaam thought that God would curse Israel because they were sinners. It is also different from the way of Balaam (see 2 Pet. 2:15), which was covetousness. But here in the verse before us, it is the doctrine or teaching of Balaam. He taught Balac the way to corrupt Israel by intermarriage with the Moabite women. This introduced into the nation of Israel both idolatry and fornication. And during the historical period that the church at Pergamum represents, the unconverted world came into the church.

(J Vernon McGee)

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

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**Revelation 2:14-15**

See notes on Rev 2:6 - This has now become a doctrine. Notice that Jesus hates this because it puts people (Priests / Religious leaders) between Himself and his children. We all have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)



16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

**Revelation 2:16**

What a mistake we make if we think that the church has the authority to decide what is right and what is wrong.

– Chuck Missler

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

**Revelation 2:17**

A white stone was a mark of acceptance in the Jewish council. Those who overcome will receive a personal acceptance from Jesus.

We will be given a new name – the ‘old’ will finally have passed away! All of the regrets of the past will be gone – they are identified to our present name.





# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Chapter 2

*The Letter to the Church at Thyatira*

Verses 18-29



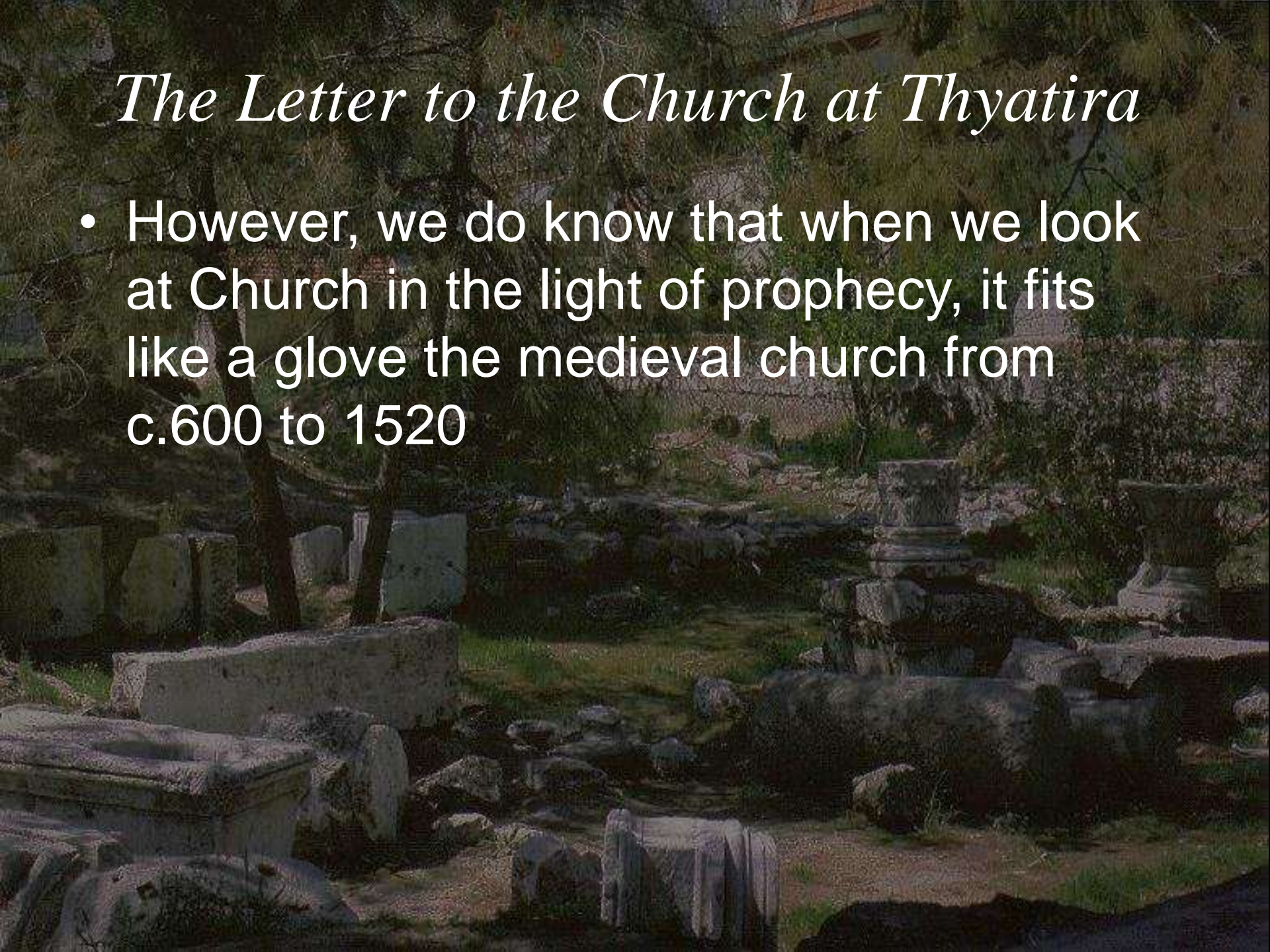
# *The Letter to the Church at Thyatira*

- The historical application has been lost in the sands of time
- Many commentators believe there was a woman – probably labelled ‘Jezebel’ – who had set herself up in the church at Thyatira as a prophetess, and probably bringing many Babylonian ideas and teachings into the church.



# *The Letter to the Church at Thyatira*

- However, we do know that when we look at Church in the light of prophecy, it fits like a glove the medieval church from c.600 to 1520





# *The Letter to the Church at Thyatira*

- However, we do know that when we look at Church in the light of prophecy, it fits like a glove the medieval church from c.600 to 1520
- The name Thyatira means 'continual sacrifice' – and is again very apt
- They traded in Purple cloth ([Acts 16:14-18](#))



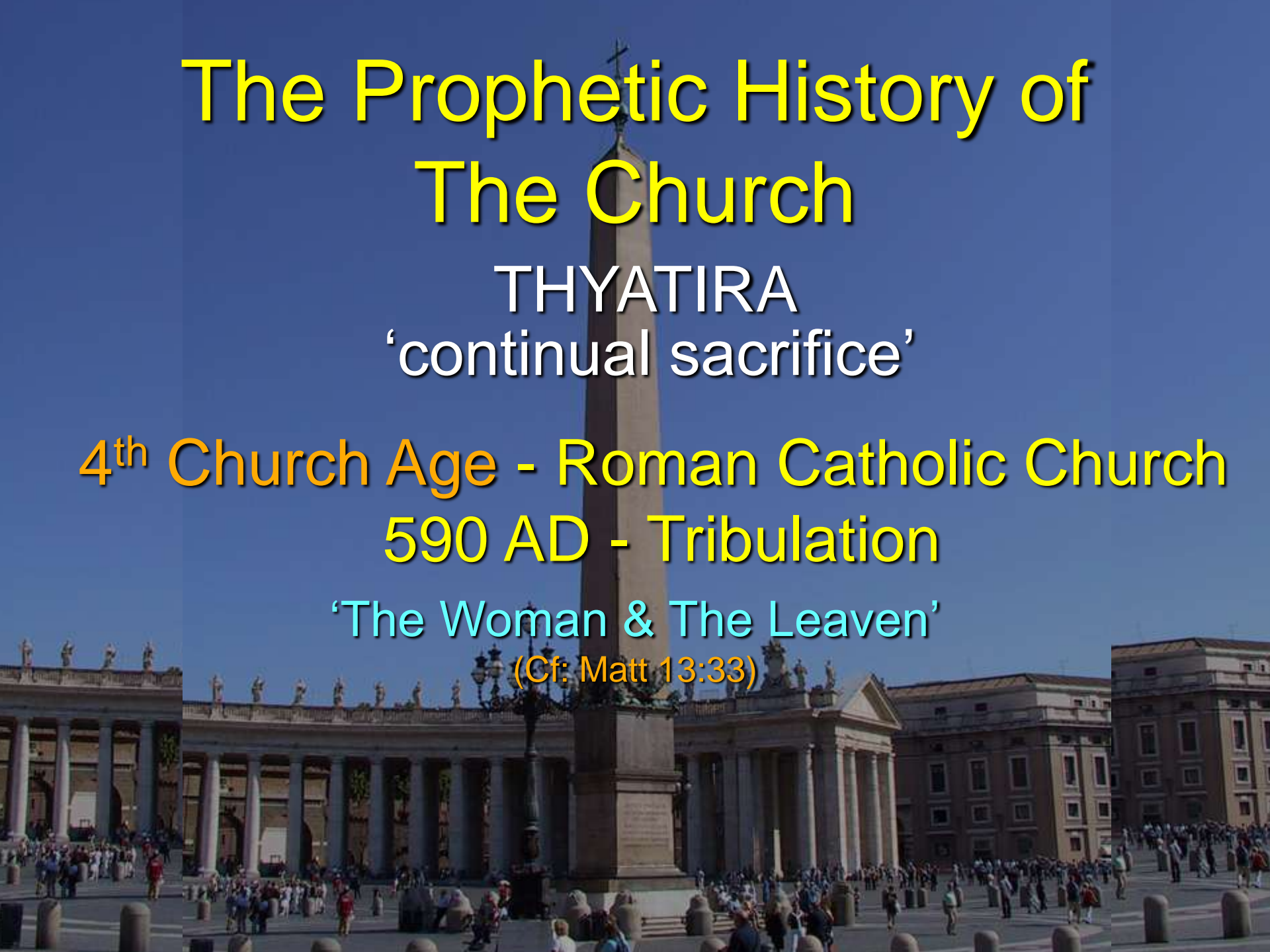
# The Prophetic History of The Church

THYATIRA  
'continual sacrifice'

4<sup>th</sup> Church Age - Roman Catholic Church  
590 AD - Tribulation

'The Woman & The Leaven'

(Cf: Matt 13:33)



# Heptadic Design

- 7 Kingdom parables

Sower	Wheat & Tares	Mustard Seed	Leaven	Hidden Treasure	Pearl of great price	Dragnet
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# The Woman & Leaven

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

**Matthew 13:33**

# Israel

Espousal Jer 2:1-2  
38 years Deut 2:14



Victory through time of war  
cf: Promised Land



Complacency brings defeat Prov 29:18  
Time of the Judges / Embracing the world



Rejection of Theocracy 1 Sam 8:7  
Beginning of the Monarchy - Saul

*“And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them”*

*1 Samuel 8:7*



18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write;  
These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes  
like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine  
brass;

**Revelation 2:18**

‘the Son of God’ is a title always used in reference to His authority. It is used here to remind the Church who is in charge. This is then backed by the idiom of ‘eyes like unto a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass – always speaking of judgment.

Jesus presents Himself as the Judge to this church. People get scared about some silly things sometimes – this however is the time to be afraid when the Creator presents Himself to you in this way.

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

**Revelation 2:19**

From a prophetic standpoint, all of the churches so far have had their own period of history. However the last four churches all appear to last up until the Tribulation (or Rapture in the case of Philadelphia).

Viewed in this light, it is a matter of fact that Christians within the Roman Catholic Church have done marvellous works of charity. As we look around the world we see hospitals and care homes started by the church – Buddhists do not start hospitals, Muslims do not establish care homes. People like Mother Theresa etc. have worked tirelessly to tackle social and political injustices. In recent years, these works have been considerable – Jesus says He knows this.



20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

**Revelation 2:20-21**

...But Jesus is absolutely clear; He is against these Christians' acceptance and toleration of the false religious system taught by this woman.

- As we have noted, not only were these letters to be sent to real churches in the first century, with the clear intention that there would also be an application to all churches and all individuals, but we also find that in the order they are given, they lay out - in advance – the history of the church! That being so, we find that the church of Thyatira depicts the era that saw the birth and subsequent future of the Roman Catholic Church. It is no surprise therefore to see some incredible parallels between the character and nature of this woman Jezebel and the Roman Catholic Church.

– *See the study notes on the Web site for more commentary*



22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. **Revelation 2:22-23**

It is no accident that the great tribulation is referred to here. This wicked woman, prophetically depicting the Roman Catholic Church, will be subject to God's wrath – a theme we will explore in more detail in Chapter 17 & 18. However, what is significant here is that it is not just this woman who will go into the great tribulation, but those who 'commit adultery' with her

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. **Revelation 2:22-23**

Yet even in the mist of this great spiritual adultery we see God's great Grace as He offers a way out.... 'except they repent of what they have done'. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).



24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

**Revelation 2:24-25**

Not all Christians were caught up in this satanic deceit. Not all in the Roman Catholic Church or the denominational churches will be swept away with this Satanic deception. God has His own and knows each one by name, and not one shall perish who is saved by the blood of the Lamb!

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

**Revelation 2:26-27**



28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

**Revelation 2:28-29**

***Verse 28*** “*And I will give him the morning star.*”

**Rev 22:16** says: “*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and **morning star**.*”

The morning star is Jesus. Here we are told that Jesus will give us Himself (in marriage) to those who overcome, occupy, hold fast until He comes.



# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

To be continued...