

GIMME DAT END TIMES RELIGION – PART IX

We have seen how over the course of time, as the Catholic Encyclopedia phrased it, a “cultus of Mary”, along with the trappings of idol worship took hold; - both in Rome and in the Eastern Orthodox churches. That hold is increasing even today. Now it is beginning to cut across not only denominational but religious lines. The notion of Mary as a near-godlike figure is beginning to serve as the uniting force between Catholic & Protestant & Hindu & New Age Goddess worshippers & even Muslims. All of this is fed by the ‘Apparitions Phenomena’ that are increasing in frequency and scope. Today we will examine just where it may be taking us from here.

ANGEL OF LIGHT

“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”
(Matthew 24:24) **“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.** (2Corinthians 11:14)

Archbishop Fulton Sheen, Catholic spokesman and TV personality nonpareil of the 1950' & 60's offered a very interesting insight on the conjunction of reported Marian apparitions and the Catholic Church's drive to unite the religions of the world. “Our Lady has been chosen to be known by the name of FATIMA, which was the name of the daughter of Mohammed, because She has come not only for the conversion of Russia but also for the millions of Mohammedans...without whom there could never be true world peace.”¹ This offered decades before the current terror phenomenon.

And so the constructed Marian personality has captured the imaginations of not only Catholics and Orthodox to other Christians; - but has spread across theologies to Muslim, and Hindu and others. One writer described her as “the one entity that can unite all of mankind under one religious umbrella”.² Take for instance the reported apparitions of Mary at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. A figure claiming to be Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary to be exact, was seen there by 3 children in multiple apparitions and tens of thousands were witnesses to some form of the event. Many of those witnesses report seeing the sun zig-zag and plunge toward the earth before resuming its normal place in the sky. Mary is said to have revealed three secrets there to the children, and we'll discuss those later. For now let it be said that what happened at Fatima were signal events in modern Catholic belief.³ But it is what has happened since that is amazing. In 2004 Portuguese media covered what was described as an “uncommon ecumenical experience” when about 60 Hindus arrived at the Fatima Shrine and conducted a religious ritual. The Hindus see Mary here as a manifestation or one of their gods.⁴ In 1992 over 500,000 Muslims turned out to venerate a statue of Our Lady of Fatima, in Bombay, India.⁵

And then there is Egypt. The late 1960's saw multiple apparitions by Mary at a Coptic Church on the outskirts of Cairo. Muslims and Christians alike flocked to see the apparitions.⁶ One woman was quoted as saying, “There were Muslims and Christians, and everyone was as one, one religion together”. The events were broadcast by Egyptian TV, professionally photographed and “personally witnessed” by Egyptian President Nasser.⁷ Viewing the photos, I saw a floating, praying woman, bathed in light with halos and doves; - very much reminiscent of a holograph. But that was not the end of Mary in Egypt. In 2000 and 2001 there were appearances in Assuit, in Upper Egypt.⁸ In the case of the events in Zeitoun, outside Cairo, it was reported that Muslims collapsed, prayed and wept, before the appearance of the “lady composed of light”.⁹ And so the words of Bishop Sheen seem prophetic indeed: As do those of the late Pope John Paul who believed that Mary would be the key to joining the Catholic and Muslim faiths.¹⁰

You must understand that the Archbishop and the Pope knew of what they spoke. There is an interesting connection between the Catholic and Islamic views of Mary. She is mentioned over 30 times in the Koran. That is more than in the Bible. She is said to be the #1 woman in heaven. And interestingly, the woman who is to rank #2 is Mohammed's own daughter named Fatima.¹¹ It is through her and her husband Ali that the Shiite branch of Islam is descended and from which the Mahdi is to come.

And beginning in 1981 in Medjugorje, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there seems to have been an explosion of Marian apparitions. This phenomenon is being reported in not only Catholic nations but Hindu and Islamic as well. Egypt, Syria, Israel, Australia, Africa, Japan and Iraq are included.¹² At Medjugore she appeared as the Queen of Peace. Since that time her message has been consistent: peace, unity, tolerance. Muslims and Orthodox are all “equal before my Son... You are all my children”.¹³ These apparitions are accompanied by miraculous events. There are healings and the sun dances and spins in the sky. That ‘miracle of the sun’, first seen at Fatima, has been reportedly repeated at “dozens of locations” and seen by “literally millions”. About 100,000 saw it in Puerto Rico in 1993, - about 120,000 in Ecuador two years later. These are but confirmations to those faithful in her redeeming / healing powers. She is calling for the unity of the entire planet. So a movement has begun, naming her the Lady of All Nations. But Mary has told her followers that unity will only come when she is recognized as equal with Jesus in the work of Redemption; - When she is named Co-Redemprix. And so her followers have petitioned the Pope to do just that.^{14 15}

The practical outworking of all of this can be seen in almost all of the Muslim nations of the Middle East. Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim are all united in a growing veneration of Mary. The presence of Catholic schools and even the prayers of priests are accepted and held in high esteem by the Islamic population.¹⁶ Mainline Protestant churches too are jumping on the bandwagon. A Methodist church on the south side of Chicago is one example. Individually, many Protestants are adapting personal Marian devotions.¹⁷ Millions from all denominations flock to the sites where Mary is said to have appeared. They are seeking physical healing, and spiritual comfort and denomination & theology are no barriers. Mary is fast becoming the ‘Great Uniter’.

The Proof Is In The Message

The testimony of countless witnesses numbering in the millions is quite impressive. But what is it that they are seeing? Let us test the spirits to see. There is that Medjugore message. All are equal before the Son. All are her children. Another message given by the apparition at Medjugore, - which according to the official website is but an extension of the apparitions at Fatima, - proclaimed that “all religions are good before God”. She also said; “division by the religions is caused by man, not God”.¹⁸ The late Pope John Paul II totally committed himself to fulfilling the unity called for by the visions of Our Lady of Fatima. The Pope in fact dedicated his life completely to Mary, (interestingly not to Jesus). John Paul was driven by that call for ecumenism demanded by the Marian apparitions. In Manila in 1981 he spoke of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of those outside of the Christian Faith. After the World Day of Prayer for Peace held in Assisi in 1986, John Paul confirmed the “universal presence of the Holy Spirit” claiming that the Holy Spirit is “mysteriously present in the heart of every person, Christian or otherwise”.¹⁹

It was at Assisi that the claimed head of all of Christendom prayed with members of 120 various religions, - each praying to their god or gods. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, and the Dalai Lama – who calls himself a god, were all there. They were joined by Christian leaders from dozens of denominations as well as “fire worshiping Zoroastrians”, African animists worshipping spirits and nature, American Indians and Japanese Shinto.²⁰ It was a great display of ecumenical tolerance. But there was just one problem: To whom were they all praying. The whole notion, - just as the notion of ‘Mary’s’ calls for unity outside of Christ; - are terribly unbiblical. Scripture is clear on this. God’s people are to be called out from the world. Paul so aptly asked the Corinthians, “**For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.**” (2Corinthians 6:14-16)

Despite “Mary’s” claims at Medjugore, the Bible tells us that the right to become children of God is reserved for those that believe in His Son. “**But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name**” (John 1:12) Jesus expanded on this while talking to the Pharisees later in His ministry. “Jesus said to them, “**If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me**”. (John 8:42) Then Jesus drew a clear line of distinction between those that accept Him and those that do not. “**You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do**”. (John 8:44)

The message all ways to God are the same may be a message of the New Age and of the Marian apparitions, - but it was never a message of Jesus. As Christ told Nicodemus: **“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”**. This message of ‘Mary’ does not stand the test of the Bible.

All of these supposed Marian apparitions have created a problem even in some Catholic circles that recognize the variance that some messages have with Biblical revelation. One Catholic writer warns that “private apparitions can detract from our path to knowing God, by placing too much emphasis on someone other than Christ”.²¹ The fact is, there is not a single instance of a Marian apparition to be found in the Bible. And as noted above, even the Catholic Encyclopedia admits that this “cultus of Mary” was not present in the early Church. The Mary that has been put forward by Rome is not the Mary of the Bible.

In fact, much Catholic teaching about Mary is not only - not in the Bible; - but it contradicts what the Bible does say. Rome teaches the Immaculate Conception, yet Romans 3:23 tells us **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”**. And though she is called a Co-Redemptrix, Luke 1:47 records that Mary confessed her own need of salvation, saying **“my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior”**. Yet Catholic teaching has evolved over the centuries, making Mary a near equal figure with God Himself. As the Bible tells us Jesus was sinless, so Rome tells us Mary was too. As 1Timothy 2:5 states there is **“one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”**, Catholics teach that she is a mediatrix. Scripture teaches Jesus ascended and Rome adds that Mary was ‘Assumed’. Christ is the King; - they claim Mary is the Queen.²²

The Mary of the Bible is a humble faithful woman, always interested in glorifying her Lord. The Mary of the apparitions often seeks her own glory, demanding the building of shrines and prayers directed to her. Yet in John 16:26-28, Jesus tells us that we have direct access to the Father Himself. The Mary of the apparitions And even the miracles of the apparitions are of a different order than those Christ performed. Christ offered no showy ‘sun dances’ to validate his messages; - but pointedly refused to give in to the Pharisees demands for such a demonstration (see Matthew 12:38-39)²³

While the real Mary, mother of the Messiah is a woman to be respected and honored and imitated, - I respectfully suggest here that the Mary of the apparitions may indeed be a manifestation of the demonic. Her message may indeed be leading people away from the truth of the Gospel and the sufficiency of God’s work on the Cross. For indeed, we are warned that **“Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light”**. (2Corinthians 11:14) **“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders”** (2Thessalonians 2:9) **“to deceive, if possible even the elect”**. (Mark 13:22)

RUMORS OF WAR...AND PEACE

Interesting times, are these! Like it or not, Israel and Jerusalem are at the center of God’s plan for mankind. And there is much going on there right now that should make the student of prophecy sit up and take notice.

Talk of Peace – God’s Word is clear on the subject. The event that will usher in the Tribulation is the confirming of a treaty of peace by the **“prince who is to come”**, the Antichrist. This seven-year covenant will be broken by a defiling of a Temple that is to be rebuilt. (see Daniel 9:26-27) Jewish tradition holds that the 3rd Temple will be erected when Messiah comes. And so comes today’s news. According to many sources, despite growing tensions between Israel and her both national and terrorist neighbors; - peace may be on the horizon. Led by Tony Blair, Israel and the Palestinians are set to sit down with the Quartet, (the EU, UN, US & Russia) and conduct peace talks sometime later this month. Some are predicting - that these will be the first steps toward a Palestinian State, on land taken from Biblical Israel.²⁴ And on the Syrian front, Israeli PM Olmert used Arab TV to directly appeal to Syrian President Assad. “Come to Jerusalem to talk”, said he. “I don’t want to fight the Syrians.” Olmert went on to appeal for direct, face-to-face “negotiations for peace” with Damascus.²⁵ Adding America’s weight, President Bush also called for a major Middle East peace conference this fall. That conference would include Israel,

the Palestinians and some Arab neighbors. Its aim would be the establishment of a Palestinian State. Hamas and Syria immediately rejected the President's call. Meanwhile, anticipating the reconstruction of the Temple, a mass gathering of "biblically-mandated Israelite priests" was held. That's big stuff. It is only Messiah that is supposed to rebuild the Temple. Harnessing modern technology, the members of the Tribe of Levi were identified through DNA testing, thereby confirming their qualifications to officiate at the Torah-mandated sacrificial system when it is re-instituted in the near future.²⁶

Preparation for War – On the other hand, both Israel and its enemies prepare for a war that could break out on many fronts. The IDF has admitted that it has shifted its focus from Palestinian terror to preparations for all out war.²⁷ Syria has warned that it wants the Golan back or there will be fighting by September. Hezbollah is said to have 18,000 rockets now, - 6,000 more than when they fought Israel last year. Syria is behind much of that build-up. Hamas is armed to the teeth and ready for war. And some experts believe that Iran will be capable of producing its own nukes by the middle of next year.²⁸ In all of this is the danger that war on any one front could spill over into all the others, threatening the very existence of the Jewish State. The latest version of Syrian Scud missiles can reach all of Israel. The Syrians are now openly speculating that Israel is no longer capable of defending themselves. That is the lesson that they've '*learned*' from the Hezbollah missile campaign of last summer. It is known that Syria has WMDs; - warheads that fit on top of those new Scuds. Damascus recently admitted that it had plans to launch hundreds of rockets at Tel Aviv and "overwhelm Israel's anti-missile batteries".²⁹ The problem is that any such Syria campaign would be a woeful miscalculation. Israel will not stand by and let itself be destroyed. Prophecy author Hal Lindsey points out that they have something called "The Samson Option" in place. Israel has over 400 nuclear weapons. They have cryptically warned in the past. Damascus, the home to so many terrorist organizations, - would almost certainly face atomic obliteration. Isaiah 17 & Jeremiah 49 seem to speak of that very event. Obadiah 1 tells of the utter annihilation of the Palestinians. Zehpaniah 2 prophecy's of the destruction of Jordan. We cannot say when, - but we know a time is coming; - when all of God's Word will be fulfilled.

YADAS

Iraq Stuff – With hardly any coverage, and despite continued casualties, the surge seems to be working. In Anbar Province, - once abandoned to the terrorists, - al-Qaeda is on the run, - chased by the local population as well as Iraqi & US troops. In Baghdad, just one US brigade seized 50 Iranian-made rocket launchers from the insurgents. They've killed 44 terrorists and captured 79 more since the surge began in June.³⁰ Iraqi forces intercepted 200 explosive belts coming over from Syria.³¹

Back On The Table – Putting together the stories from the London Guardian and the Jerusalem Post; - it seems influenced by Vice President Cheney, President Bush "has shifted back in favour of military action" against Iran.³² According to sources, the US would conduct the strikes, - not the Israelis.³³ It is believed that the Bush Administration does not trust the next president, - no matter which party, - to deal with the impending Iranian crisis.

'If Its Nay Catholic...It's Crap' – Pope Benedict XVI issued a decree confirming standing teaching, - stating that the Catholic Church is the only true church and that others lack the "means of salvation". Rome claims to be the "one true Church of Christ". Almost concurrently the Catholic Diocese of Los Angeles agreed to pay over \$600 million to about 500 victims abused by priests there. In the past Portland, Spokane and Boston have paid out significant sums to settle clergy abuse cases. Five other diocese have sought bankruptcy protection to avoid the issue.³⁴

Gays Taking Over – A Memphis TV station and FOX News independently reported on a rash of incidents involving generally lesbian gangs called "Gays Taking Over" or GTOs, that are using intimidation and rape on school girls as young as 10 in order to convert them to a gay lifestyle. The Shelby County Tennessee Sheriff's Department described sodomy using sex toys and forced sexual activity going on right in the public schools. World Net Daily estimated that as many as "150 attack squads" sometimes called DTOs, (Dykes Taking Over) are active in the Washington DC area alone.^{35 36}

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