



Benedict XVI ***The last pope?***

BY IRVIN BAXTER JR.

Pope Benedict XVI greets the crowd from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Tuesday, April 19, 2005. Joseph Ratzinger of Germany, who chose the name of Pope Benedict XVI, is the 265th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. (AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis)

For several weeks the world's attention was riveted on the dying of an old pope and the beginning of a new one. John Paul II had the largest funeral to ever take place on earth. Then came the extraordinarily short conclave. In less than 24 hours, the Cardinals chose Joseph Ratzinger of Germany as the new pope.

For 455 consecutive years, the popes of the Roman Church came from the nation of Italy. Then in 1978, Pope John Paul II from Poland was chosen. Now another non-Italian, Joseph Ratzinger of Germany, has been chosen to fill the office of the papacy. For his papal reign, he chose the name of Benedict XVI.

Is he the False Prophet?

Scripture is crystal clear that whoever is pope at the time of the Antichrist will fill the role of the False Prophet. All factors indicate that we are very near the time of the Antichrist now. Consequently, we simply have to ask the question: Could Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, be the False Prophet himself?

Reasons he could be

Ecumenism and Interfaithism

During the time of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, a world religion will be implemented and enforced. In his first speech as pope, Benedict XVI said that his "primary task" would be to work to reunify all Christians and that sentiment alone was not enough. "Concrete acts that enter souls and move consciences are needed," he declared. He also pledged to reach out to other religions.

From 1986-92, Cardinal Ratzinger served as president of the Commission for the Preparation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. In 1992, he presented the new catechism to Pope John Paul II. It was the first new catechism in 400 years.

In the section dealing with relations with the Muslims, it states: The plan of salvation includes those who, together with us, worship the one God of Abraham, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims. (Item 841)

These things Benedict XVI has said and done seem to indicate that he is totally comfortable with ecumenism and Interfaithism.

Revival of the Holy Roman Empire

The kingdom of the Antichrist will be a revival of the Holy Roman Empire. Germany has been the heart of the Holy Roman Empire since it was born in 800 AD. The first emperor was Charlemagne, the king of the Franks—as in Frankfurt, Germany. Ratzinger has emphasized the importance of restoring the Catholic Church to the prominence that it has historically enjoyed. As the first German pope in almost 1,000 years, he may be the perfect person to produce such a European reawakening to the Catholic faith.

His choice of the name Benedict may show his special feeling toward Europe since St. Benedict is the patron saint of Europe.

The Great Tribulation

The Bible prophesies that the three and one-half year reign of the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be the time of the great tribulation.

Those who refuse to pledge allegiance to the world government and the world religion will become the target of terrible persecution. For over twenty years, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has presided over the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith formerly known as the Office of the Inquisition. This is the office that carried out torture and even death during the Inquisition of the middle ages. Ratzinger has been so famous for his ferocious defense of Catholic doctrine that he has been "God's Rottweiler" in news reports around the world. Would he be capable of presiding over the coming events of Revelation 13:15-18? I don't know. But I do know how I feel about Rottweillers!

Mother church and her daughters

Benedict XVI has insisted that other Christian churches not be called "sister churches," but "daughter churches" (*TIME* religion writer David Van Biema from Time.com 4/19/05). He contends that the Roman Catholic Church is the "Mother" of other Christian churches. This is an amazing affirmation of the prophecies in Revelation 17:5 about the Roman Church: "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Ratzinger is right. The Roman Church is the "Mother", and the Protestant churches are the "Daughters." (For more complete explanation see the video—"True Christianity vs. False Christianity" from Endtime. Call 1-800-END-TIME or go to www.endtime.com.)

Why he is probably not

Age

In spite of all the obvious reasons why Benedict XVI could qualify for the role of the False Prophet, there is one over-riding factor why he probably will not be the religious leader of the Antichrist era.

We know there is a seven-year period ahead that will be begun by the

Antichrist's confirming of a covenant. It seems certain that this seven-year period has not yet begun. Pope Benedict XVI is 78 years of age. It is not likely that he will live long enough or have the vigor to play the role prophesied for the False Prophet during the final seven years leading to Armageddon.

The brother of Pope Benedict XVI Georg Ratzinger, 81, said he was "very concerned" and "shocked" upon hearing that Cardinal Ratzinger had been elected as head of the Roman Catholic Church because of his age and frail health.

"I am very concerned. I would have thought his advanced age and his health, which is not very stable, would have been reason enough for the cardinals to pick someone else," his brother said in an interview on German television.

One leading reason Ratzinger was elected was his age. It was a strong consensus that the cardinals would elect an older pope, not wanting two very long papacies in a row. Some say, at his age, he will simply be a caretaker pope.

However, Greg Erlandson of *Our Sunday Visitor*, the largest Catholic newspaper in the USA, disagrees. He wrote, "You don't pick someone with this kind of serious intellectual firepower and ask them to be a caretaker of someone else's legacy." The last time the Roman Catholic Church picked a "caretaker pope", they received a shock. Pope John XXIII was elected at the same age as Ratzinger. He turned the church upside down by calling Vatican Council II, setting in motion reforms that the church is still attempting to come to grips with.

So could Pope Benedict XVI actually be the False Prophet?

Because of his age, it seems unlikely that the new pope will be the False Prophet. However, some individuals have been able to retain their vitality far into their 80's. Since the final seven years could begin at any time now, we cannot say that a False Prophet Benedict is a total impossibility. We can say, however, that if he is not the False Prophet, he is perfectly suited to prepare the way for the one that is to come. **E**