

dispel the darkness which increased day by day until the winter solstice.

Just as Christianity took over the pagan festival associated with the winter solstice and turned it into Christmas, so Judaism seems to have incorporated elements of paganism into Hanukkah. There is an increasing tendency today for Christmas and Hanukkah to become merged in societies where Jews are found, with Jews exchanging Hanukkah cards and presents at the same time as Gentiles exchange Christmas cards and presents.

Another Jewish legend associated with the origin of Hanukkah is that when the temple was rededicated the seven-branched menorah (candlestick or lampstand) of the temple could not be used because it was defiled. A new one was made, and it had eight lamps instead of seven, both to distinguish it from the original and to commemorate the eight days of the feast. This eight-branched lampstand became known as a *hanukkiya* (*hanukkiyot* in the plural), and it became the practice to add an extra and completely



A drawing of a typical *hanukkiya*, with eight branches and a central lamp from which the others were lit.

separate branch from which the others were lit. Jews traditionally display these eight-branched candlesticks in their homes around the time of Hanukkah, and there seems to be an increasing trend for non-Jews to have the same sort of thing in their windows over Christmas.

Sources: "The camel and the Hanukkah question and other issues relating to the Festival of Lights", Yadin Roman, *Eretz*, Nov.–Dec. 2004; *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Christ*, Alfred Edersheim.

The funeral of Pope John Paul II

Nigel Bernard

The recent death of the pope attracted much interest. Some of the religious ceremonies associated with his death are considered here, and are shown to relate to prophecies of the harlot in Revelation 17.

IN PROVERBS 21 we read: "The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness" (v. 12). In his book on Proverbs, Brother Aleck Crawford, using the New American Standard Bible, gives the following, more accurate, rendering: "The Righteous One considers the house of the wicked, Turning the wicked to ruin".¹ Brother Crawford suggests that "The Righteous One" refers to God.

Following the illness and death of Pope John Paul II, the attention of the world has been on Rome. The Roman Catholic Church is a prime example of "the house of the wicked". As we consider this house we must ensure that our view of it is not swayed by the world's perception, but rather is based on how God considers it. In this article we will consider some of the aspects relating to the death of the pope by comparing them with Scripture.

Many waters

In Revelation 17 the Roman Catholic system is described as "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters" (v. 1). The waters "are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (v. 15). The day after the pope died an open-air mass was held at the Vatican. BBC reporter Stephanie Holmes described the gathering of people as waters: "A sea of people flooded to St Peter's Square in the Vatican on the morning after the death of Pope John Paul II".² This "sea of people" was made up of "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues", for, as she also reported, "The crowd was made up of faces from all over the world".

This was even more evident at the funeral itself, where the whole world seemed to be represented. As another BBC reporter, Peter Gould, stated: "In life, John Paul II travelled the world, taking his message to the faithful. In death, the world came to him. Presidents and prime ministers, kings and queens were here to pay homage to a remarkable pope".³

1. Crawford, A. (1989), *Proverbs*, Vol. 2, Hallet Cove, The WORD Typeset.
2. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4406017.stm>.
3. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4424563.stm>.

Purple, scarlet and gold

In Revelation 17 it is written that “the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold” (v. 4). Aspects of this verse are seen in Stephanie Holmes’s description of the mass. With regard to “purple”, the choir was “led by a purple-robed priest”. Scarlet and gold were evident, for the cardinal who led the service was “dressed in robes of white, scarlet and gold”.

Mary the Mother

The coffin of cypress wood used at the funeral had a cross painted on it. One of the cross-pieces was longer than the other in order to accommodate a large letter ‘M’ that was written below it. Although only a single letter, it spoke volumes of the “blasphemy” (v. 3) of the Roman Catholic Church. The ‘M’ stood for ‘Mary’, whom the Catholics regard as the ‘Mother of God’. This was seen in the homily delivered at the funeral by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

In speaking of the pope, he said, “the Holy Father found the purest reflection of God’s mercy in the Mother of God”.⁴ Towards the end of his homily he said, “We can be sure that our beloved Pope is standing today at the window of the Father’s house, that he sees us and blesses us. Yes, bless us, Holy Father. We entrust your dear soul to the Mother of God, your Mother, who guided you each day”.

At the heart of this blasphemy is the perverted logic of the Trinity. The Trinitarian doctrine is that Christ is God. As Mary was the mother of Christ, then, it is reasoned, Mary is the mother of God.

But this was not the only blasphemous teaching in the homily. As we have seen, the cardinal addressed these words to the dead pope: “bless us, Holy Father”. This is contrary to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, Which is in heaven” (Mt. 23:9).

Ecumenical

As already mentioned, countries from all over the world were represented at the funeral, both informally by ordinary people who had travelled to Rome and also by heads of government. But there was a coming together at the religious level as well.

Cardinal Ratzinger stated at the funeral, “I greet the authorities and official representatives of other churches and Christian communities, and likewise those of different religions”. Other churches and religions bowed down to Rome in

Attendance at the pope’s funeral

A reader has sent me a list of the official attendees at the pope’s funeral from the nations of the world. A total of ninety-one nations were represented, from the following areas:

- Africa 14
- North and South America 21
- Asia and Oceania 18
- Europe 38.

Among the various dignitaries attending were the following:

- 7 monarchs
- 45 presidents
- 25 prime ministers.

—T.B.

a way which would have been unprecedented in former years. Truly “the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Rev. 17:2).

Conclusion

The funeral of the pope and the arrangements relating to it appeared to go flawlessly. The funeral itself was highly organised, including the seating of leaders from around the world. Beyond the boundaries of the Vatican State the city of Rome was commended by commentators for the way it handled a massive influx of visitors. This tells us something about the Roman Catholic Church and about the wider world in which it operates. It has the wherewithal in terms of both resources and organisation to propagate its ways and teaching in an extremely efficient manner.

In Revelation 17 the woman sitting “upon a scarlet coloured beast” is a rider who is able to control the beast and who has the power of the beast at her disposal. We should not underestimate the religious power in Rome. It is all too easy to compromise and bow down to Rome, as many non-Roman Catholics did at the funeral; but Paul says, “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). And we know that when Christ returns the house of the wicked will be overthrown and turned to ruin (Prov. 21:12).

4. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4425207.stm>.