

Identifying the Antichrist

The prophecy of Daniel 7 describes a little horn that arises from the head of the fourth beast. Since the little horn power represents the Antichrist, it is essential that we correctly identify this power.

Daniel 7 gives us very precise identifying features of the horn, and every single one must apply in order to make an accurate identification possible. The 13 features are as follows:

It arose out of the fourth beast

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn (Daniel 7:7-8).

Papal Rome arose out of the ashes of pagan Rome. Historian Carl Eckhardt says this:

When the Roman empire had disintegrated and its place had been taken by a number of rude, barbarous kingdoms, the Roman Catholic Church not only became independent of the state in religious affairs but dominated secular affairs as well.ⁱ

All historians agree that papal Rome emerged out of the ruins of the ancient pagan Roman Empire. Thomas Hobbes, English Historian, says this:

If a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof.ⁱⁱ

The description of the little horn power is in connection with the fourth beast. This is very important, since there are many who adopt a preterist view of the Antichrist and would like to associate the Antichrist with Antiochus Epiphanes IV, a Greek king who persecuted the Jews and desecrated the temple. This would, however, not fit the prophecy, as the Antichrist is to arise out of the fourth beast, which is Rome.

It came up among the ten horns

I considered the ten horns and, behold, there came up among them another little horn (Daniel 7:8).

Note that the little horn arises among the ten, which implies that the ten were already there when it arose and, all ten were still in existence when it made its appearance.

The Antichrist was to come up among the ten horns, growing from a small power to the greatest. This is indeed true of the Papacy. After the initial fusing of Christianity with the pagan religions of the time, the bishop of Rome increased in power while the emperors of the Roman Empire supported him.

Constantine was the first emperor to embrace Christianity, but he only cloaked himself with a veneer of the religion. In the year 533 AD, emperor Justinian decreed that the bishop of Rome was the spiritual leader of the Christian world.

To qualify as a horn, this power must have the attributes of a kingdom, which indeed applies to the Vatican, which to this day is an independent state. Also, it arose amongst the powers of fallen Rome. The Europe that we know today is the remnant of the horn of Rome.

It came up after the ten horns had been established

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn (Daniel 8:7-8).

The Roman Catholic Church grew in power after Constantine accepted Christianity, but it did not control secular affairs until the Justinian decrees went into effect. The power of the bishop of Rome steadily increased and papal authority in secular affairs arose after the Barbarian division of Rome in 476 AD.

The *American Catholic Quarterly Review* says this:

Long ages ago, when Rome through the neglect of the Western emperors was left to the mercy of the barbarous hordes, the Romans turned to one figure for aid and protection, and asked him to rule them...and thus...commenced the temporal sovereignty of the popes. So, meekly stepping to the throne of Caesar, the vicar of Christ took up the sceptre to which the emperors and kings of Europe were to bow in reverence through so many ages.ⁱⁱⁱ

William Barry says this:

The Pax Romana has ceased; it is a universal confusion. But wherever a Bishop holds his court, religion protects all that is left of the ancient order. A new Rome ascends slowly above the horizon...the heir of religion which it has overthrown; it assumes the outward splendour of the Caesars...The emperor is no more...But the Pontifex Maximus abides; he is now the Vicar of Christ, offering the old civilisation to the tribes of the North. He converts them to his creed, and they serve him as their Father and Judge Supreme. This is the Papal Monarchy, which in its power and its decline overshadows the history of Europe for a thousand years.^{iv}

The rise of the little horn occurred after the subdivision of Rome into ten powers in 476 AD. At this time, the little horn became firmly established in order to qualify as a horn, that is, to be a king or a kingdom:

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them (Daniel 7:24).

It was to uproot three horns

I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots (Daniel 7:8).

Three of the ten kingdoms were to be destroyed by the instigation of the little horn power. Only the Papacy fits this description. Three kingdoms that did not accept the papal mandates regarding Christ's divinity were literally uprooted and mercilessly destroyed. Although the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was correct, the method of dealing with it was not.

Since the little horn made its appearance after the subdivision of Rome into ten different states (after 476 AD) but before the destruction of three of them because it arises among all ten, we now have a very definite time frame for the rise of the Antichrist power. The Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths were eliminated by the year 538 AD. This power was to arise between 476 AD and 538 AD.

These conquests strengthened the hand of the Papacy, which was established by the year 538 AD. In that year, the bishop of Rome ascended the papal throne under the protection of the Roman general Vigilius. The date for the establishment of papal Rome as an independent power can thus be pinned at 538 AD.

It was to be greater than the others

...and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows (Daniel 7:20 NKJV).

The power depicted by the little horn was greater than that of the other states. This implies a position of political superiority. Although it began small, the little horn power was to become greater than all the other powers.

The Papacy wielded greater power than any country or king. The Papacy has always interfered in political affairs. Countries were divided by papal decrees, and kings enthroned and dethroned by papal decrees.

Since 800 AD, when Charlemagne received his crown from the Pope, the Papacy assumed power over kings and nations. In 1077, King Henry IV of Germany stood in the snow for three days before being permitted an audience with Pope Gregory VII. Likewise, in 1213 King John of England stood naked on a cold marble floor waiting for admission to the Pope's presence in order to apologize to him.

Note the testimony of a Catholic functionary:

[T]he vicar of the incarnate Son of God, anointed high priest and supreme temporal ruler, (the Pope) sat in his tribunal impartially to judge between nation and nation, between people and prince, between sovereign and subject.^v

Luther wrote this:

It is a horrible thing to behold the man who styles himself Christ's vicegerent, displaying a magnificence that no emperor can equal...He is, say they, the Lord of the World; but Christ Himself has said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Can the dominions of a vicar extend beyond those of his Superior?^{vi}

It was to be different than the others

...He shall be different from the first ones (Daniel 7:24 NKJV).

The Papacy is different from the pagan kingdoms before it, because it is both a political power and a religious power. Politically, the Vatican is a recognized state, complete with a traditional guard and its own postal service.

The Vatican is the smallest state in the world, occupying a mere 100 acres, but it has one of the strongest diplomatic bodies in the world. Papal representatives sit in the capitals of the world, and in turn these countries have their representatives in the Vatican. The Pope is not only head of the Church, but also temporal sovereign of the Vatican state.

The little horn represents a king or a kingdom different from all the previous kingdoms, which were secular kingdoms. The Papacy fits that role because it is both religious and political.

It was to have eyes like the eyes of a man and speak great words against God

...behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things...And he shall speak great words against the Most High (Daniel 7:8,25).

The little horn power is humankind rising up against God and speaking great words against Him. It refers to a system that defies God directly and sets itself up in opposition to God.

It is significant that the little horn power is likened to a man. This same symbol was also applied to Babylon (Daniel 7:4). In Daniel 2, the king of Babylon was referred to as the head of gold. All power was vested in the king. His word was law, and he was considered a god.

Similarly, in the great antitype, all power will once again be vested in one man who, as the spokesman for the system, will utter blasphemies and claim to be God. Papal power is seated in one man. At the council of Trent, the decrees of the Pope are considered the very decrees of God. The doctrine of papal infallibility further expanded this concept and gave to the popes a position that should only be given to God.

John Calvin said this about the Pope:

His kingdom will consist of speaking great words, or blasphemies, against the Most High.^{vii}

Following are a few examples of blasphemous statements regarding the Papacy's position on earth:

The Pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man, but as it were God, and the vicar of God...He is likewise, the divine monarch and supreme emperor, and king of kings...So that if it were possible that angels might err in the faith, or might think contrary to the faith, they could be judged and excommunicated by the Pope.^{viii}

All names which in the Scriptures are applied to Christ, by virtue of which it is established that he is over the church, all the same names are applied to the Pope.^{ix}

The priest has the power of the keys or the power of delivering sinners from hell, of making them worthy of paradise, and of changing them from slaves of Satan into children of God. And God himself is obligated to abide by the judgment of his priest,

and either not to pardon or to pardon...When Michael comes to a dying Christian who invokes his aid, the holy archangel can chase away the devils, but he cannot free his client from the chains till a priest comes to absolve him.^x

QUESTION: Does the priest truly forgive the sins, or does he only declare that they are remitted?

ANSWER: The priest does really and truly forgive the sins in virtue of the power given him by Jesus Christ.^{xi}

The Papacy is a blaspheming power. No other power on earth has dared to make such claims. Not only does the Papacy claim to hold the position of God, but it also steals His divine prerogative to forgive humankind's sins. These are blasphemies of the highest order.

It was to make war on God's saints

I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them (Daniel 7:21).

Throughout history, the great wars of Europe were fought on religious grounds. The Protestants of Europe were relentlessly persecuted by Rome. Europe was plunged into the Thirty Years' War with the sole purpose of destroying the Protestant Reformation.

The Waldenses, Albigenses, and Huguenots were relentlessly persecuted, and the Inquisition ordered the cruelest of punishments to be executed by the princes of Europe upon all those who refused to bow to the supremacy of Rome. In 1200, AD Pope Innocent III ordered the king of France to exterminate the Albigenses because they refused to accept the papal teachings and regarded the Bible as the ultimate Word of God. Historians D'Augbigné and Wylie say that more than a million of these innocent people were massacred in one single campaign.

John Calvin, in a letter to Emperor Charles V, wrote:

I deny that See to be...the vicar of Christ, who, in furiously persecuting the gospel, demonstrates by his conduct that he is Antichrist.^{xii}

In the 13th century, St. Thomas Aquinas said that convicted heretics should be put to death just as surely as other criminals, because they were counterfeits. In a 1912 Catholic magazine we read this:

You cannot excite any piety in our souls by whining accounts of Catholic atrocities...We have never written a line in extenuation or palliation of the Inquisition. We never thought it needed a defence.^{xiii}

The church historian Philip Schaff makes this comment:

So far as we know, the popes never uttered a word in protest against the inhuman measures which were being practised by the Spanish Tribunals.^{xiv}

The historian Lecky says this:

The Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that has ever existed among mankind.^{xv}

The little horn power was a persecuting power that would war against God's people, and have success against them.

It would think to change times and laws

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws (Daniel 7:25).

Catholic catechisms show that the Papacy has tried to change the law of God. The Ten Commandments have been tampered with. The Second Commandment, which refers to images and idols, is absent in the Catholic catechism. And to make up for the loss of one commandment, the Tenth is divided into two. The Fourth Commandment, which talks about the Sabbath, becomes the third commandment in the Catholic catechism. The day of worship is shifted by papal decree from Saturday to Sunday.

Catholic Dr. Johann Eck, Luther's principal adversary, said this in 1533:

There is no mention of the cessation of the Sabbath and the institution of Sunday in the gospels or in Paul's writings, or in all the Bible; therefore, this has taken place by the apostolic Church instituting it without scripture.^{xvi}

Here are several other Catholic sources that confirm the changing of Scripture:

The church took the pagan philosophy and made it the buckler of faith against the heathen. She took the pagan Sunday and made it the Christian Sunday. There is in truth something royal, something kingly about the sun, making it a fitting emblem of Jesus, the sun of justice. Hence the church in these countries would seem to have said, 'keep the old pagan name, it shall remain consecrated, sanctified.' And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus.^{xvii}

The Christian Sabbath is therefore to this day the acknowledged offspring of the Catholic Church, as a spouse of the Holy Ghost, without a word of remonstrance from the Protestant world.^{xviii}

The Bible says "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day". The Catholic church says "No! By my divine power, I abolish the Sabbath day, and command you to keep holy the first day of the week," and lo, the entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the Holy Catholic Church.^{xix}

It pleased the church of God that the religious celebration of the Sabbath day should be transferred to the Lord's day (Sunday).^{xx}

The laws and times mentioned in Daniel 7:25 are laws that God Himself has established and times that God Himself has set. The law that stands out throughout the Bible is the Ten Commandment law.

Papal Rome tampered with the law of God and changed the ordinances, even though God says, "For I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

The saints were to be handed over to it for a time and times and half a time

Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time (Daniel 7:25 NKJV).

In this passage, a "time" represents a year. The period described as "time and times and half a time" is thus a three and a half year period. The New Century Version of the Bible renders the text "three and a half years." For further confirmation of this time period, we can turn to Revelation 12:14, which uses the same expression.

In other verses, the same event is described in different words. This parallelism gives us greater clarity about the precise time period involved. In Revelation 12:6, the same time period is given as, "a thousand two hundred and three score days." This is 1260 prophetic days, or three and a half prophetic years.

In Bible prophecy, a day represents a year. Numbers 14:34 says, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." See also Ezekiel 4:6.

According to the day-year principle, 1260 prophetic days becomes 1260 years. The word used here for time is **IDDAN**, which means a prophetic year consisting of 360 days. Therefore, "time and times and half a time" refers to three and a half prophetic years, consisting of 1260 prophetic days. This is highlighted in the parallelism of the prophecy in Revelation where the three and a half year period is equated with 1260 prophetic days, or 1260 literal years.

A time	times	and half a time	
(1 Jewish year)	(RSV "two times")		
360 days	720 days	180 days	= 1260 prophetic days

The Papacy would persecute the saints for 1260 years. The legally recognized supremacy of the Pope began in 538 AD, when Emperor Justinian elevated the Bishop of Rome to the position of Head of all Churches. This is known as the Edict of Justinian. Adding 1260 years to 538 AD brings us to 1798, which is the year the Pope was deposed when the French General Berthier, under Napoleon, led him into

captivity. Napoleon apparently tried to crush the Papacy, and about 18 months later the Pope died in exile in Valence, France. This act ended papal power in terms of enforcing papal decrees.

The Bible clearly identifies the papal system as the Antichrist. The Papacy has placed itself in the place of Jesus Christ on Earth, and claims to be able to mediate between people and God. The great reformers were all united in their recognition of papal Rome as the Antichrist power. But the Bible predicts that this same power will continue to reign until the end and will again enforce its decree contrary to God's law.

It shall devour the whole earth

Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces (Daniel 7:23).

This prophecy is made in reference to Rome, but pagan Rome did not fulfill this prophecy. However, papal Rome does fit the scenario. The Papacy is receiving the same supremacy over Europe that it enjoyed in the Middle Ages. This amazing prophecy is being fulfilled to the letter, and papal standards and decrees will once again be accepted as laws of nations.

The leaders of the world have granted Rome the recognition she desires and have hailed her as the "moral superpower." They have credited Rome with bringing communism to an end and religious bodies are accepting papal supremacy in religious affairs.

It shall reign until the Ancient of Days comes

I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came (Daniel 7:21-22 NKJV).

Papal supremacy in the Middle Ages was temporarily suppressed in 1798 when Napoleon invaded Rome and sent the Pope into exile. Rome lost its sovereignty, but regained it again in 1929, when Mussolini returned the papal states to the Papacy. The Bible predicts that the little horn power would again reach the supremacy that it enjoyed in the Middle Ages.

The fact that the little horn power was to exist until the Ancient of Days comes makes it impossible for Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated Jerusalem's temple in 168 BC, to be the Antichrist. This commonly accepted preterist view is further made impossible because Jesus, Paul, and John all speak of the Antichrist as a future power.

The Antichrist was to arise before 538 AD and prevail until the Ancient of Days comes. No individual could fulfill this prophecy. Only the Papacy spans the timeframe outlined in Daniel 7.

Its dominion will be taken away

But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end (Daniel 7:26).

The stone will strike the feet of the image and all the kingdoms with their earthly pomp and fake powers will shatter when the Lord comes. Jesus declares, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Paul says that there would "come a falling away" of the Church before the Second Coming of Christ. The "man of sin" opposes God and tried to steal the position of God on Earth. He, instead of God, sits in the temple of God, "showing himself that he is God." This is the Antichrist, the one in the place of the true Christ.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. For the mystery of iniquity doeth already work...And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8).

The good news is that God will triumph. When Christ returns, the Antichrist power will be destroyed and God will set up His kingdom that will never be destroyed. There will be no more sickness or persecution, and God will dry away all tears.

Identifying the Little Horn

Sad and shocking as it may seem, there is only one power that qualifies for all the identifying points of the little horn power of Daniel 7. It is essential that we realize that the Bible is not dealing with individuals, but with a religious and political system that for more than 1500 years has claimed the power to control the planet's conscience. Moreover, for a set time, it had power to enforce its decrees and to persecute all who chose to obey God and His Word.

The Bible is dealing with a power that is misusing its position, and presuming to take the very place of God. Individuals are responsible to God for the light they live up to. In condemning the system, God is not condemning the individuals within the system who are living up to light they have and long to have a relationship with Him.

There is only one system that meets all the identifying features listed in Daniel chapter 7, and this is the Papacy.

Identifying the Antichrist throughout History

Daniel 7 identifies the Papacy as the Antichrist. Throughout history, others have also stated that papal Rome is the Antichrist.

The Apostle Paul said that the "mystery of iniquity" was already working in his day, and would grow to full revelation before the Second Coming of the Lord. The great French reformer, John Calvin, identified the Antichrist. In 1536, he wrote this:

Daniel and Paul had predicted that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God...We affirm him to be the Pope...Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff "Antichrist", but those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak.^{xxi}

Martin Luther also identified the Antichrist from his studies of Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, and the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation. In 1520, Luther wrote this:

I am practically cornered, and can hardly doubt any more, that the Pope is really the Antichrist... because everything so exactly corresponds to the way of his life, actions, words and commandments.^{xxii}

Calvin and Luther were not the only church leaders to identify the Antichrist. A host of reformers such as Thomas Cranmer, John Wycliffe, John Wesley, John Huss, Jerome, John Knox, and John Melancthon all identified the Antichrist as the Papacy. Luther also said this:

We are not the first who interpret the Papacy as the kingdom of Antichrist ...He (John Purvey in 1390 AD) rightly and truly pronounces the Pope 'Antichrist' as he is...a witness indeed, foreordained by God to confirm our doctrine.^{xxiii}

The same papal power will reveal itself again in the closing stages of this earth's history, we need to be grounded in Scripture so that we are not swept away by the subtle workings of this power.

I would recommend that each person prayerfully study the Scriptures, asking guidance from God, and follow Paul's example:

And [Paul] trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do (Acts 9:6).

This article is adapted from the book *Truth Matters* by Dr. Walter Veith.

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