

Who is the Antichrist?



The following notes contain some of the material presented in the series "Is God for Real?"

The subject of the antichrist in the Bible has been the topic of much speculation over the years. Just who is this antichrist power, and when and where will he appear? The coming antichrist is mentioned in the Bible in 1John 2:18 and 1John 4:3. The Antichrist is also known by other names in the Bible: The Beast, The Abomination of Desolation, Babylon, and the Little Horn. The term Antichrist can mean the adversary of Christ, or in the place of Christ. When speaking of this power Jesus directed His disciples to the Old Testament prophet Daniel to gain understanding, Matthew 24:15. So with this in mind, let us take a look at a fascinating prophecy found in the book of Daniel chapter seven.

In Daniel chapter seven the prophet Daniel records a vision he had of four beasts rising out of the sea, Daniel 7:2-3. The waters here represent multitudes of people, (Revelation 17:15), and the four beasts represent four kingdoms that would arise upon the earth, Daniel 7:17, 23. The four beasts represent the four kingdoms of Babylon, MedoPersia, Greece and Rome, and they follow the same basic pattern of the prophecy given in Daniel chapter two. Even today we sometimes represent different nations with different animals. The Australian rugby team is called the Wallabies, and the South African rugby team is called the Springboks. God is simply using these four beasts in Daniel seven to represent the four great empires. One principle of understanding Bible prophecy is that often prophecies are repeated and then enlarged upon. Thus, the order of nations in Daniel two is repeated in Daniel seven and then the prophecy is enlarged upon.

When describing the fourth beast, Rome, in Daniel 7:7, the writer records that this beast had ten horns. These ten horns represent ten kingdoms that grow out of the ruins of the Roman Empire, Daniel 7:24. There is also another horn, a little one, which comes up among them. If the other horns represent kingdoms, then this little horn represents a little kingdom. But who is this little horn kingdom? More is written in this chapter about this little horn kingdom than any of the four previous empires, indicating that this kingdom would have a greater influence on the world than even Babylon, Persia, Greece or Rome. Who could this possibly be? The Bible gives us ten identifying characteristics of this little horn power, so that there can be no doubt as to its identity. The ten characteristics are these:

1. It arose out of the fourth beast, V8
2. It arose among the ten horns, V8
3. It arose after the ten horns, V24
4. It was different from the others, V24
5. Looked greater than his fellows, V20
6. Uprooted three kings, V24
7. Spoke great words against God, V25
8. It would persecute the saints, V25
9. Think to change times and laws, V25
10. Reigned for time, times and half a time, V25

Who is this Little Horn? Many Reformers identified it as The Papacy in Rome. "Many of the great Christians of Reformation and post-Reformation times shared this view of prophetic truth and identified anti-christ with the Roman Papacy... Among adherents to this interpretation were the Waldenses, the Hussites, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli,

Melanchthon, Tyndale, Latimer and Ridley." George Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, p.33. At this point it should be said that there are many sincere, Christian, spirit filled, heaven bound, believers within the Roman Catholic faith. We are talking here about the institution and the system of teaching, and not

all of the individuals within that church. So, let us take a look at the ten identifying characteristics and see how the Papal power fulfils these characteristics:

1. The Papal power arose out of the fourth beast, or the Roman Empire, and still has its headquarters at the Vatican in Rome to this day.
2. It arose among the other nations of Europe which emerged after the fall of Rome.
3. The Roman Empire fell around 476 AD. The Roman Papacy emerged as a powerful religious-political force in 538 AD.
4. It was different because it represented a religion as well as a political kingdom.
5. Just as the little horn represents a little kingdom, so the the Vatican is the smallest kingdom on earth. Nevertheless, it's influence is greater than the other nations around it.
6. In order to exercise its power, the Papacy did indeed uproot three kingdoms - the Heruli, the Vandals and the Ostrogoths. The Heruli kingdom met their fate with the Catholic Emperor Zeno in 493 A.D. Another emperor, Justinian exterminated the Vandals and then broke the power of the Ostrogoths in 538 A.D. It was during this time that Justinian made a decree establishing the Bishop of Rome as the political and religious leader of Western Rome. Thus, the three horns of Daniel's prophecy were "plucked up by the roots," making the rise of the church in Rome a reality.
7. The Roman Catholic church has made numerous statements over the centuries that might be considered blasphemous. Notice these examples; "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty," Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical letter, 20th June 1894. "The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, but he is Jesus Christ Himself, hidden under veil of flesh." The Catholic National, July 1895.
8. The Roman church is responsible for the deaths of millions of people over the centuries who did not wish to practise their faith the Catholic way. Notice this statement, "The church has persecuted. Only a tyro (novice) in church history will deny that... We have always defended the persecution of the Huguenots, and the Spanish Inquisitions... When she thinks it good to use physical force, she will use it." The Western Watchman, 24th December 1909.
9. As we have noted previously in this series, the Roman Catholic church acknowledges that it has changed the law of God by changing the Sabbath to Sunday. The Sabbath commandment, Exodus 20:8-11, is both a time and a law. The church has said, "The Pope has power to change times, to abrogate laws, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ." Decretal De Tranlantic Episcop. Ferraris Ecclesiastical Dictionary.
10. This time period is given in symbolic language and means three and a half years. A biblical year had 360 days, thus three and a half years would represent 1260 days. Here again we apply the day/year prophetic principle to recognise that this represents 1260 literal years. This began in 538 AD and concluded with the imprisonment of the Pope under Napoleon's forces in the year 1798 AD. The Bible clearly reveals the identity of the antichrist so that we will not be deceived by its power and influence. We must decide whether we will follow Christ or antichrist. Christ has made salvation available to everyone of us. Will you choose Him today?

If you would like to know more about this subject, or others in the series, 'Is God for Real?' then please contact one of our staff and they will be happy to help you.